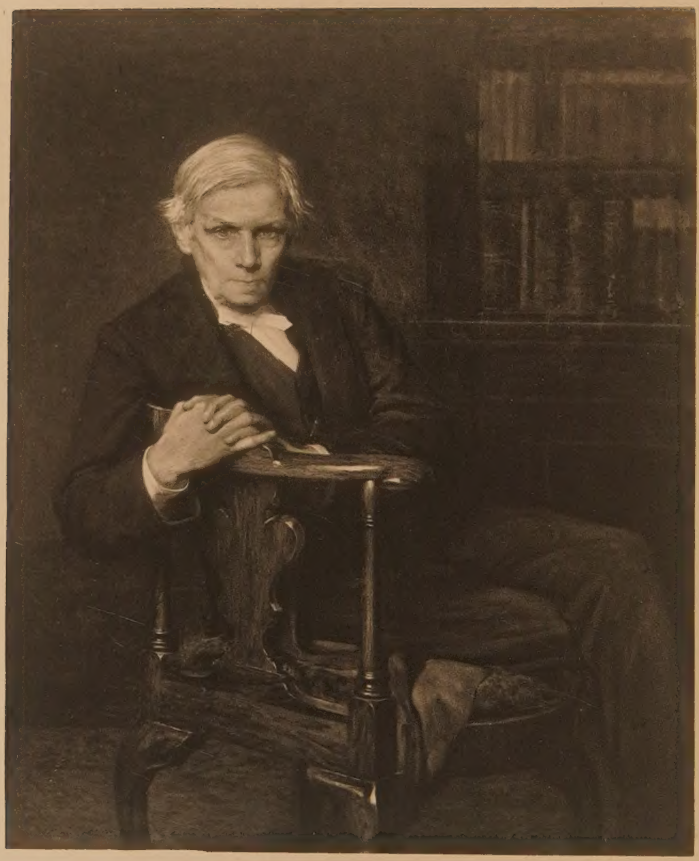

ALFRED AINGER.

FROM A PORTRAIT BY MR. HUGH RIVIÈRE.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

OF

ALFRED AINGER

BY

EDITH SICHEL

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TO

MARGARET ROSCOW

THE NIECE AND COMPANION

OF ALFRED AINGER

February 1906.

PREFACE

THE only reason for writing any preface to this little volume is that it provides me with a means of giving thanks to those who have helped me by criticisms and suggestions, and by their memories of Canon Ainger. I therefore take this occasion of expressing my great gratitude to Mr. Birrell, to Dr. Ward (Master of Peterhouse), to Mr. Gosse, to Mr. Horace Smith, to Mr. R. C. Browne, to Mr. Birdwood, to Canon Beeching, and to Mr. E. V. Lucas, for the valuable assistance they have given me.

I have also to convey my thanks to those who have enabled me to print so many letters from Canon Ainger, as well as some written to him; and in this connection I should like to acknowledge the courtesy of Mr. A. C. Swinburne in allowing me to publish a letter written by himself.

My thanks are no less due to Messrs. Murray, and to the Editor of the *Quarterly*, for consenting that I should embody in this book some parts of an article, 'Canon Ainger,' which I wrote for that periodical in January 1905; and to Messrs. Macmillan for giving me permission to make use of extracts from Canon Ainger's published works. Also to Miss Johnston, who has allowed me to reproduce the photographs privately taken by her—the two of Alfred Ainger in his youth, as well as the one of his father.

February 11, 1906.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

Alfred Ainger was born on February 9, 1837. On his father's side he came of French Huguenot stock, as, indeed, we might have expected, when we recall the gifts that made him unique—his Gallic power of being serious without being solemn—his union of grace and quickness with an almost Puritan sobriety. He himself found pleasure in his descent. 'As you say,' he wrote to a connection [1] in 1898, 'there is not much inducement just now to wish to provide ourselves with a French origin; but I confess the idea of having some Celtic blood in me is not displeasing. I wish indeed you may trace us up a little closer to the events of 1685. There can, I think, be no doubt whatever as to our Huguenot origin. The coincidences (of craft and calling) are too marked to be merely coincidences.'

His forebears had been silk-weavers, and he was delighted when, one day in Spitalfields, two French weavers, who recognised him, came up and claimed relationship with him on the strength of their name being Anger. From the fact of this traditional craft he drew scientific conclusions of his own.

'It is very interesting,' he says to the same correspondent, William Ainger, 'to trace the Huguenot trade of silk occupying the family so long. It is perhaps this inherited association with silk gowns that has brought about, by a subtle association, my now long connection with the Bar.'

And he writes elsewhere to Mr. Ainger:—

'I discovered a curious fact in connection with our name when

[1] Mr. William Ainger. He and Alfred Ainger had a great-great-grandfather in common.

I was (for the first time in my life) in Ireland this autumn. In the Huguenot quarter of Dublin is a street called "Aungier Street," and it certainly looks as if some namesakes of ours, if not relatives, must have given the street its name. Were you aware of the fact? I presume we hail from the city of Angers—of which later spellings are perhaps attempts to represent the pronunciation of the French. . . . I am very sensible indeed of the services you have rendered and are still rendering to those of our name. I hope your children thrive, and will hand it down still further. . . . I thank you sincerely . . . for the charming portraits of your two boys—who seem, among other things, to partake of the *esprit gaulois*, to which our Huguenot descent should entitle them, as they appear to have a fine sense of *fun*.'

There is little to be known about Alfred Ainger's forebears and relations, and it seems part of his remote and fay-like personality that it should be so. But his own saying that 'one must never talk of one's relations, or one might at any moment become a bore,' has doubtless something to do with our ignorance. The uncle and aunt who are 'characters'—the old-world grandmother of biography—are here lacking, though the names of his predecessors, Samuel and Nathaniel Ainger, suggest strong wills and snuff-boxes and fixed ideas about the French Revolution. The only traditional presence we can find is that of the nurse common to all distinguished persons, the devoted soul who charms her nursling's infancy by her stories. Such an one, 'Lem,' cheered Alfred's early days, and, settling in her age in Staffordshire was faithfully visited by him till her death. And when, only a few years afterwards, he himself lay dying, he constantly murmured her name, wandering, as it seemed, among the tender pieties of childhood.

His father, Alfred Ainger, was a very remarkable man, the son of Samuel Ainger, an architect settled in London, who had but one other child, a daughter, Margaret, afterwards Mrs. Nicol. Alfred Ainger, the elder, pursued his parent's profession and was well-known in his day, especially for the building of University College Hospital and the palm-house at Kew, which caused a stir in its time. Perhaps it was he who endowed his son with that love of form which always characterised him, in his life and talk as well as in his writings.

Another bequest that the elder made the younger was wit. Mr. Ainger had a racy tongue—there was plenty of salt in his conversation. Many of his sayings, as old friends record, passed into household proverbs, though the deplorable lack of setting down experiences has made it impossible to rescue even one of them from out the gulf of oblivion. 'I can see his funny twinkle when he said them—it is a pleasure to think of him always,' says one, who was often in his house; and his sallies told the more because of his quiet, dreamy manner and easy-going ways. People were often misled by them and imagined him to be 'soft'—a fact which would at once have been refuted by any one who had business dealings with him. Generous and sensitive and shy, he did not reveal himself easily, except in intimacy, over a keen game of chess (he was a fine player), or in talking about his favourite pursuits. He loved books and art—belonging to the Fine Arts Society and boasting several of its medals—but, before all else, he loved science. Mathematics on the one hand, the microscope on the other, absorbed his mind and his leisure, while his friendship with Faraday was an important fact in his life. His scientific outlook told, doubtless, upon his thought. An attentive student of the Bible, as his marginal notes testify, and nominally a Unitarian, he practically maintained a free attitude to all religious bodies and attended neither church nor chapel. 'Why have we been told so much, and yet so little?' he used to exclaim regretfully; and thus he remained—in the realm outside conviction of any kind.

Those that knew him did not forget him, and his calm but astute personality stamped itself upon the memory of the young friends whom Alfred brought home. 'His father,' writes one of these, 'I can only recall as a quiet figure, receiving his son's companions kindly, but with a certain nervous aloofness—a diffidence akin to Colonel Newcome's in like circumstances. I, the least effervescent of that youthful band, was, perhaps, alone in my consciousness of an observant eye noting our "tricks and manners." In my remembrance I think of him as of Milton's father, keenly interested in his son, guiding without interference, and always ready to withdraw

into his own elder thoughts, as the other old gentleman did to "his rest and devotion," and like him, I think, "without the least trouble" imaginable—none certainly that his son could spare him.'

The face that his portrait shows us has something of the actor, a good deal of the thinker, still more of the artist about it. It is massive, with full lips, shrewd eyes and a broad brow, framed by thick hair growing high as if it had visible vitality, and, whatever else it may be, it is essentially the face of a humorist. Yet, in spite of this fact, it bears not the slightest resemblance to the frail fantastic countenance of his son, and is as solid and as literal, if we may say so, as the other is ethereal and elusive. While still young he came to London, and in 1828 he married Miss Jagger of Liverpool. The Jaggers were a musical family, the mother possessing a remarkable voice, while the four daughters were gifted musicians, and two of them taught their art with considerable success. They were all skilful verse-writers, too, and used to amuse their leisure moments by writing poems to one another.

Mr. Ainger and his wife settled first in Doughty Street, then in John Street, Southampton Row. At 10 Doughty Street his four children were born—a much-loved boy who died at five years old; then two girls, Adeline in 1830, and Marianne in 1835; lastly Alfred, in 1837. When he was only two his mother died, and the sensitive spirit that most needed her never knew what her love would have meant. 'If any excuse will be allowed to a man at the great day of judgment, will it not be to him who can say, "Lord, I never knew my Mother"?'—so he wrote in his notebook twenty-four years later. All the more did his elder sister, Adeline, seven years his senior, take her place and inspire in his childish heart a feeling which swayed him more than any other, and which, from his infancy onwards, took on it the tinge of romance. In these first days he was the pride and pleasure of his father, who delighted in this responsive little boy. He took especial pleasure in his movements, and used to flick him with his handkerchief to make him dance, an accomplishment which the baby excelled in, tripping and

MR. AINGER.
(FATHER OF ALFRED AINGER.)

turning like a fairy with quick, windlike motions. The child in this was father to the man, for the gift never left him, although in his clerical days he had not the same scope for it. It was the counterpart of his other attainment, his whistling—shrill, silvery and birdlike—which also began in early days, as if the fairies had bestowed an elfin pipe upon him at his christening. Little letters signed 'Your affectionate Scaramouch'; round-hand records of how high he swung and how he got on with his Latin; 'Villain,' the playful nickname by which 'Scaramouch' retaliated upon his father —all these signs, small in themselves, show the ease and good-fellowship between them, and their jokes together made the merriment of the household. But Mr. Ainger married again, and this fact, coupled with the speedy advent of a second family, doubtless made some difference in his subsequent intercourse with the first. Alfred's childhood continued, however, to be a happy one, as outwardly eventless and inwardly eventful as childhood is wont to be. One real episode was a trip that he took at seven years old with his stepmother and elder sister to Coblentz, to visit his Aunt Nicol there. It was his first peep into foreign lands and it may have left with him that love of the Rhine which he always kept, and some sweet echo of German music to haunt him in after years. One of his cousins can remember how he sketched; how eagerly he listened to the story of Ulysses with which she beguiled his walks with her; and how she tried to teach him German, all in vain, the only words he mastered being *Du bist ein Schwein*, which he picked up for himself and used as repartee to those who vexed him. But he soon returned to England and normal life, and a letter that he wrote this same year to his crony, 'Jocky,' shows the pursuits that filled his days.

'My dear Jocky,—I should like you to come and see me very much, for I have got a very nice studio to take all my friends in when we want to have a little private conversation.

'I have got a statue and some very fine oil-paintings in it, and a reading-desk and a pair of globes. I heard the other day it was your birthday, it is only a few weeks since mine. I was 7 on the ninth of February.

'I have just finished writing a book, which I have called Rambles in Wales, it has 14 pages in it you shall read it when you come here. I have got a delightful book called the *Rejected Addresses*. I have read it through a great many times. I think you would like it too.—Your friend, ALFRED AINGER.'

The 'I have read it through a great many times. I think you would like it too'—the settling, bee-like, *inside* the book he loved till he had got all its honey—the quickness and sobriety of judgment, above all the need of a companion with whom to share his enjoyment—these traits of his at seven years old remained as characteristic at sixty-seven. Indeed his tastes, man or child, at any period of his life, are summed up in this little note—talk and space and tranquil privacy, diversified by the pangs and joys of authorship and the pleasure of holiday rambles in Wales or elsewhere.

His choice too of *Rejected Addresses* was significant of what came after. Parody is a sympathetic rather than a creative gift, and, if it count at all, must mean strong literary sympathies, and actual identification with the authors parodied. From the first Alfred showed signs of his parodying wit and of the strong literary affinities which, as the years went on, became like personal partialities. He used to say that he owed his love of literature to *Elegant Extracts*, which he constantly studied as a child, and that the other book which then fascinated him was a cookery-book to which—so he liked to say—he ascribed his knowledge of food. His fancy played round all that he read and lent a second life to his reading. But Lamb's *Tales* soon led him to Shakespeare, and a new world opened before him.

Books, however, were not his only resource. From the first his literary sympathies found another outlet—in his youth the main one—that of acting. When he was still quite small he loved to act a part, and to mystify, even in the commonest domestic incidents of life. The only story of his childhood still extant is characteristic enough. His stepmother had sent him upstairs to see what the baby of the moment was about. He returned with a grave but unconcerned air: 'The baby,' he said, 'is sucking needles, sitting with its legs hang-

ing over the window-sill.' As he grew older, the actor in him grew more conscious—more polished is perhaps the better word—and he and his sisters were always acting. Their Christmas plays became the events of the neighbourhood. Adeline, the elder sister, was a musician and had besides a pretty gift for versifying, while Marianne, the younger, was more like him in wit, although her tongue was more caustic than his. Presently Alfred became playwright as well as actor, and the programme of his *Midas*, a drama written in his early teens and famous in his own circle, is, as it were, an epitome of youth and festivity. As such, it is worth reproducing here, unchastened by any excision.

NEVER ACTED

THEATRE ROYAL, CARLTON HILL

THIS EVENING

Tuesday, April 27th, 1852

Will be produced (First Time) an entirely New and Original Grand Comico-Classical, Romantic, Pathetic, Moral, and Musical Burlesque, composed expressly for the Carlton Hill Company by Alfred Ainger, Jun., with entirely New Scenery, Dresses, Decorations, and Appointments, entitled

MIDAS

Dramatis Personæ

Midas (King of Phrygia) . . .	Mr. A. AINGER, Jun.
Silenus (a Satyr, a little overcome) .	Mr. CHARLES DICKENS, Jun.
Apollo	Miss STONE.
Mercury	Miss M. AINGER.
Genius of Burlesque	Signor PASQUINADO.
Attendant	Mr. W. ELDERTON.
Court Executioner	Mr. JOHN KETCH.
Anaxyra (a blooming Princess) .	Miss JULIA SMALLS.

Dresses by Miss M. Ainger. Scenery by Miss Ainger.
Sole Lessee and Manager, Mr. A. Ainger, Jun.

Previous to the performance, a Brilliant Overture will be performed by Mrs. and Miss Ainger.

Vivat Regina.

The play did not only boast a programme, but pen-and-ink illustrations behind the scenes by Miss Stone, the artist of the group—illustrations full of Hessian boots and pompous 'properties' and obscure jokes which must once have set a troop of young people laughing. The manuscript, carefully transcribed in a feminine hand, is much what might be expected from any brilliant boy of fifteen—full of squib-like allusions and extravagant brilliance, some of it rather elaborate, as youthful wit is wont to be. Alfred's acting must have been much more remarkable than his writing, and his power of transforming himself was, from the beginning, unique. His powers in this way were striking enough to disturb friends as well as amuse them. In Hampstead, where the Aingers often took summer lodgings, there was a certain old gentleman of strict views and regular habits, whose large family of boys and girls often claimed Alfred as master of their revels. His acting had, however, so subversive an effect upon the sobriety of the house, that its head, perhaps himself affected, found the results unendurable. 'I won't have that damned tragedian in the place!' he cried, and his objurgation is the highest testimonial he could have offered to the innocent actor of fifteen.

The Aingers had other friends in Hampstead, chief among them the Johnstons, whose town house in Bayswater Terrace Mr. Ainger had built for them. Then, and for nearly forty years afterwards, they made a country home of the Manor House at North End, whose hospitable walls and garden have, under their reign, listened to so many notable guests. The Hampstead of those days was a little rural town, with its own local life and its own Assembly Rooms, where it held its choice Conversazioni. The Miss Johnstons were about the same age as the young Aingers, and the two families set up one of those close relationships, full of daily meetings and neighbourly runnings in and out, so much more possible then than now. Neighbours still existed as a race, not a name, before district railways and other machines abolished them and their reality, nor was it yet the fashion to pack the day so full with distant engagements. Distraction is a great leveller of character, and

MRS. AINGER.
(ALFRED AINGER'S MOTHER.)
From a miniature.

sixty and odd years ago there was more originality than now. Directly we strive for a quality, as nowadays we strive for originality, we may assume that it is dead or dying; and the social circles of the forties and fifties showed more unconscious independence of mind, stronger prejudices, and more concentrated warmth than are at present common. The Johnstons can still remember delightful escapades and excursions with the Aingers: an expedition to Kew by carriage with postilions riding before; quips and quizzings, exquisitely funny to youth and impossible to preserve; or innocent impromptu escapades —rhymed letters to unknown recipients, and valentines, models of epigram, in which Adeline especially excelled. Of course all were alike the accomplices of the inspiring Alfred, but she had a vein of her own and would sometimes start forth on independent jokes.

More serious matters also occupied the brother and his sisters. There were books as well as play, and constant keen literary discussions over the new works of Kingsley and of Tennyson. And there was a great deal of music. This was Mrs. Ainger's chief bond with her step-children, and she herself was no inconsiderable musician, so that Alfred's love of music was early fed on the right food and his gift, expressed in singing, found due training from the outset.

When he was twelve years old, there came a great change in his life. His health was always delicate, necessitating constant care, and till now he had been sent daily to University College School, which was close to his second home in John Street. There is not much to record of him there beyond the fact that, at eleven, he gained the first prize for French. But some time in 1849 his parents moved to St. John's Wood; and that same year they sent him away to a boarding-school at Carlton Hill, an event that bore unlooked-for results affecting his whole course.

It here becomes necessary to sum up in as few words as possible the religious conditions under which he had been brought up, because his attitude in this respect was always the keynote of his career. These conditions were unusual. His father, as we have seen, was nominally a Unitarian, and

so, at first, was his stepmother, though not much more devout than her husband in the profession of her creed. In later days, under the influence of Mr. Bellew, the well-known flowery preacher, Mrs. Ainger transferred her affections to the Church of England and had all her family baptized according to its rites; but, in childish days, the little boy was taken to Unitarian services and was brought up amid a Unitarian society. The atmosphere of his home was not religious, and both he and his sister Adeline had sensitive and spiritual natures, yearning for faith and discipline, for warmth and light, and finding the climate of home uncongenial to their instincts. The school at Carlton Hill to which Alfred now went was kept by a man remarkable both for his scholarship and character, and he and his three daughters, soon Alfred's greatest friends, were keen admirers of Frederick Denison Maurice, whom they regularly went to hear at Lincoln's Inn Chapel. Hither they took Alfred every Sunday; and it was here, under the religious spell of that great personality—the double spell of the preacher and of the beautiful ritual now his, as it were, for the first time—that the boy at last found what he had wanted. The religion which was to last him his life, to comfort and restrain and uphold him, thus came to him not as to others. It came as a great emotion, making all things new, and Maurice remained its representative. The remembrance of his sermons did not fade with time. 'There is,' he wrote long after, 'one among them, on the raising of Lazarus, simpler, I think, than his wont, and presenting fewer of his peculiar difficulties of thought and style. It is sixteen years since that balmy summer afternoon when I heard him deliver it in the solemn, quiet chapel of Lincoln's Inn; and even as I write I see the "prophets blazoned on the panes" of the ancient windows, and look up to that living prophet-face which no one who ever saw it could forget, and hear once more

> '"The trembling fervency of prayer
> With which he led our souls the prayerful way."'

That same prophet inspired him till the last days of his life. 'Go upstairs and look at Maurice's portrait; it will do you

good to see his face,' he said to a young man who, shortly before his death, had been sitting by his bedside writing his letters for him.

Mr. King, his schoolmaster, had methods of teaching far in advance of his time. An enthusiast for the classics and for literature, he could not bear mechanical lessons, and tried to make learning part of life instead of making life into learning. To his pupils he was ever a man first, not a pedagogue, and more than one of them has since made a mark in the world. Here Charles Dickens sent his sons, and so did Macready the actor—their appointed lessons are set down side by side with those of their schoolmate Alfred Ainger; here, too, Frederic Harrison began life, and others more or less distinguished. There was no academic mustiness in the school atmosphere, for the Kings had interesting friends and their Thursday evenings were frequented by people of note, by Charles Dickens and Sir Edwin Landseer and by Keightley, the writer. Mr. King's younger girl worked with the boys, and began and continued Greek with Alfred; her elder sister, Louisa, a polished and deeply-versed scholar, taught Greek in the school and was, beside her father, the only teacher of that tongue there. She had never had a readier pupil than the boy who now entered her class, for Alfred, hitherto confined to Latin, was enchanted by the Greek language and, spurred on by his girl companion, who vied with him in zeal, overcame the rudiments with remarkable speed and quickly plunged into Euripides. Their occupations, however, were not always scholastic. As quickly as Alfred mastered Greek did he grow to be one of the family, and his Sunday evenings with them remained, as his letters testify, 'green places' in his memory long after. 'Where 's Alfred?' Mrs. King would ask at any meal at which he was a few minutes late, and Alfred would enter soon after, often with some little dainty that he knew she fancied. 'Where 's Alfred?' became indeed a constant refrain on the lips of every member of the household. There still remains a frolic sermon, inscribed to his playfellow, Gertrude King, on the text 'Do sit still and be quiet'—a homily divided into headings and directed against

too much unselfishness. The same 'Gertrude' keeps a lively memory of a churchgoing not so solemn as usual, an occasion when they did not go to hear Maurice and when the preacher took the Woman of Samaria as his subject. 'She was,' he said, 'a woman of remarkable energy. She had had five husbands.' Alfred's companion never forgot his face, nor his form trembling with suppressed laughter at this climax of eloquence, and the clergyman's words were that day unforgotten by at least two members of his flock.

Alfred Ainger's school-life had some unexpected results, and not the least important of these was his friendship with Charles Dickens, whose sons were Alfred's comrades at school. 'I have seen him and have touched him,' was all that he could say on his return from spending the evening for the first time at the great man's house. The relationship in itself was epoch-making in Ainger's life, but it had a more direct effect. It moulded, perhaps we should rather say fashioned, his literary humour and his outlook upon men; evoking a ready response from something that lay already there, waiting for the magician's wand to spring into life; and, once for all, shaping his dramatic talent. From his schooldays and for several years onwards, Alfred took part in all the play-actings at Tavistock House, with the emperor of fun, Boz himself, as stage-manager, and sometimes as fellow-actor. Charles Dickens found an apt learner, one who could follow nimbly his will-o'-the-wisp leading, flashing back some of his own light upon him, answering genius in its own coin—smaller change, naturally, but stamped in the same mint. Dickens delighted in teaching him and used to say that he had never seen so docile a pupil. And Ainger's acting at sixteen or seventeen must have had the real electric quality, since his singing of 'Miss Villikins' in the part of Lord Grizzle, on Twelfth Night, 1854, caused Thackeray to 'roll off his chair' in a burst of laughter that became 'absurdly contagious.' The play was Fielding's *Tom Thumb*, and was acted at Tavistock House—it is Forster, in his *Life of Dickens*, who chronicles the episode. Nor does Forster speak without authority, for he used to take part in these high revels. Alfred Ainger himself has

recorded his impressions in a paper that was written some eighteen years later, soon after the death of Charles Dickens, when sorrow had sharpened and concentrated the remembrance of those early days.[1]

'What nights have we seen at the "Mermaid"!' What evenings were those at Tavistock House, when the best wit and fancy and culture of the day met within its hospitable walls! There was Thackeray, towering in bodily form above the crowd, even as he towered in genius above them all, save only one: Jerrold, with the blue convex eye, which seemed to pierce into the very heart of things and trace their subtle resemblances; Leech, with his frank and manly beauty, fresh from the portrayal of "Master Jacky," or some other of the many forms of boyhood he knew so well: Mark Lemon, "the frolic and the gentle" (dear to all us younger ones, irrespective of blood-relationship, as "Uncle Mark"): Albert Smith, dropping in late in the evening after a two or three thousandth ascent of Mont Blanc, but never refusing, at our earnest entreaty, to sit down to the piano and sing us "My Lord Tomnoddy," or his own latest edition of "Galignani's Messenger": Augustus Egg, with his dry humour, touching from contrast with the face of suffering that gave sad presage of his early death: Frank Stone, the kindly neighbour and friend, keen as any of us boys for his part in the after-piece: Stanfield, with the beaming face, "a largess universal like the sun," his practised hand and brush prompt to gladden us with masterpieces of scene-painting for the Lighthouse or the Icefields: and last, but not here to be dismissed with a few lines only—our bountiful host, like Triplet, "author, manager, and actor too"; organiser, deviser, and harmoniser of all the incongruous assembled elements; the friend whom we have so lately lost—the incomparable Dickens. . . . In one sense our theatricals began and ended in the schoolroom. To the last that apartment served us for stage and auditorium and all. But in another sense we got promotion from the children's domain by degrees. Our earliest efforts were confined to the children of the family and their equals in age, though always aided and abetted by the good-natured manager, who improvised costumes, painted and corked our innocent cheeks, and suggested all the most effective business of the scene. Our first attempt was the performance of Albert Smith's little burletta

[1] *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1871.

of *Guy Fawkes*, which appeared originally in the pages of his monthly periodical, the *Man in the Moon*; at another time we played *William Tell*, from the late Mr. Robert Brough's clever little volume, *A Cracker Bon-bon for Evening Parties*. In those days there were still extravaganzas written with real humour and abundant taste and fancy. The Broughs, Gilbert à Beckett, and Mr. Planché could write rhymed couplets of great literary excellence, without ever overstepping the bounds of reverence and good taste. . . . Mr. Brough brought up before Gesler for "contempt of hat"; Albert, his precocious son, resolving that, as to betraying his father, "though torn in half, I'll not be made to split"; and when he comforts his father, about to shoot at the apple, by assuring him that he is "game," the father replying, "Wert thou *game*, I would preserve, not shoot thee." This is drollery, it seems to us, not unworthy of Sydney Smith or Hood, and in no way to be placed in the same catalogue with the vulgarities and inanities of a later brood.

'Another year found us more ambitious, and with stronger resources, for Mr. Dickens himself and Mr. Mark Lemon joined our acting staff, though, with kindly consideration for their young brethren, they chose subordinate parts. In Mr. Planché's elegant and most witty fairy extravaganza of *Fortunio and his Seven Gifted Servants*, Mr. Dickens took the part of the old Baron Dunover, whose daughters so valiantly adopt man's attire and go to the wars; Mr. Lemon contenting himself with the *rôle* of the Dragon, who is overcome by Fortunio's stratagem of adulterating the well, whither he usually resorted to quench his thirst, with a potent admixture of sherry. What fun it was, both on and off the stage! The gorgeous dresses from the eminent costumier of the Theatres Royal; our heads bewigged and our cheeks rouged by the hands of Mr. Clarkson himself; the properties from the Adelphi; the unflagging humour and suggestive resources of our manager, who took upon him the charge of everything, from the writing of the playbills to the composition of the punch, brewed for our refreshment between the acts, but "craftily qualified," as Michael Cassio would have said, to suit the capacities of the childish brain, for Dickens never forgot the *maxima reverentia* due to children, and some of us were of *very* tender age: the comedian who played (in a complete jockey's suit and top-boots) Fortunio's servant Lightfoot was—we are afraid to say *how* young—but it was somewhere between two and three, and he was announced in the bill as having been

"kept out of bed at a vast expense." The same veracious document represented the sole lessee and manager of the Theatre Royal, Tavistock House, as Mr. Vincent Crummles, disguising Mr. Dickens himself in the list of *dramatis personæ* as the "Modern Roscius," and Mark Lemon as the "Infant Phenomenon"—an exquisitely conceived surprise for the audience, who by no means expected from the description to recognise in the character the portly form of the editor of *Punch*. The time, by the way, must have been the winter preceding the commencement of hostilities with Russia, for Mr. Dickens took advantage of there being a ferocious despot in the play—the Emperor Matapa—to identify him with the Czar in a capital song (would we could recall it!) to the tune of "The Cork Leg," in which the Emperor described himself as "the Robinson Crusoe of absolute state," and declared that though he had at his Court "many a show-day and many a high-day," he hadn't in all his dominions "a Friday!" Mr. Planché had in one portion of the extravaganza put into the mouth of this character for the moment a few lines of burlesque upon Macbeth, and we remember Mr. Dickens's unsuccessful attempt to teach the performer how to imitate Macready, whom he (the performer) had never seen! And after the performance, when we were restored to our evening-party costumes, and the schoolroom was cleared for dancing, still a stray "property" or two had escaped the vigilant eye of the property-man; for Douglas Jerrold had picked up the horse's head (Fortunio's faithful steed *Comrade*), and was holding it up before the greatest living animal painter, with "Looks as if it knew *you*, Edwin!"

'Another time we attempted Fielding's *Tom Thumb*, using O'Hara's altered version, further abridged and added to by the untiring master of our ceremonies. Fielding's admirable piece of mock-heroic had always been a favourite of Charles Dickens. It has often been noticed how rarely he quotes in his books, but the reader of *Pickwick* will remember how in an early chapter of that immortal work Mr. Alfred Jingle sings the two lines:—

> "In hurry, post-haste, for a licence,
> In hurry, ding-song, I come back."

They are from Lord Grizzle's song in *Tom Thumb*. Mr. Lemon played the giantess Glumdalca, in an amazing get-up of a complete suit of armour and a coal-scuttle bonnet; and Mr. Dickens the small part of the ghost of Gaffer Thumb, singing his own

song, on the occasion, a verse of which may be quoted, if only to illustrate the contrast between the styles of the earlier and later burlesques. In O'Hara's version the ghost appears to King Arthur, singing:—

"Pale death is prowling,
Dire omens scowling
Doom thee to slaughter,
Thee, thy wife and daughter;
Furies are growling
With horrid groans.
Grizzle's rebellion
What need I tell you on?
Or by a red cow
Tom Thumb devour'd?
Hark the cock crowing, [*Cock crows.*]
I must be going.
I can no more!" [*Vanishes.*]

Mr. Dickens's substituted lines were, as nearly as we remember, the following:—

"I've got up from my churchyard bed,
And assumed the perpendicular,
Having something to say in my head,
Which isn't so very particular!
I do not appear in sport,
But in earnest, all danger scorning—
I'm in your service, in short,
And I hereby give you warning—
[*Cock crows.*]
Who's dat crowing at the door?
Dere's some one in the house with Dinah!
I'm called (so can't say more)
By a voice from Cochin China!"

Nonsense, it may be said, all this; but the nonsense of a great genius has always something of genius in it.

'The production next year, on the same stage, of the drama of *The Lighthouse*, marked a great step in the rank of our performances. The play was a touching and tragic story, founded, if we are not mistaken, upon a tale by the same author, Mr. Wilkie Collins, which appeared in an early number of his friend's weekly journal, *Household Words*. The principal characters were sustained by Mr. Dickens, Mr. Mark Lemon, Mr. Wilkie Collins, and the ladies of Mr. Dickens's family. The scenery was painted by Clarkson Stanfield, and comprised a drop-scene representing

the exterior of Eddystone Lighthouse, and a room in the interior in which the whole action of the drama was carried on. The prologue was written, we believe, by Mr. Dickens, and we can recall as if it were yesterday the impressive elocution of Mr. John Forster as he spoke behind the scenes the lines which follow:—

> "A story of those rocks where doomed ships come
> To cast their wrecks upon the steps of home:
> Where solitary men, the whole year through,
> The wind their music, and the brine their view,
> Teach mariners to shun the fatal light,—
> A story of those rocks is here to-night:
> Eddystone Lighthouse."

Here the green curtain rose and discovered Stanfield's drop-scene, the Lighthouse, its lantern illuminated by a transparency. . . . The main incident of the plot—the confession of a murder by the old sailor, Aaron Gurnock, under pressure of impending death from starvation (no provisions being able to reach the lighthouse owing to a continuance of bad weather), and his subsequent retraction of the confession when supplies unexpectedly arrive—afforded Mr. Dickens scope for a piece of acting of great power.

'The farce of *Mr. Nightingale's Diary*, the joint production of Dickens and Mark Lemon, which followed Mr. Collins's play at Tavistock House, was well calculated to exhibit the versatility of the principal actor. Mr. Dickens played one Mr. Gabblewig, in which character he assumed four or five different disguises, changing his dress, voice, and look with a rapidity and completeness which the most practised "entertainer" might envy. This whimsical piece of extravagance had been before played by the same actors in the performances for the benefit of the Guild of Literature and Art, but has never been printed, except privately for the use of the original actors. What portions were contributed by the joint authors respectively we can only surmise; but there were certain characters and speeches which bore very clearly stamped upon them the mark of their authorship. One of the characters played by Mr. Dickens was an old lady, in great trouble and perplexity about a missing child; of which character (being nameless in the drama) he always spoke, when he had occasion to refer to her off the stage, as Mrs. Gamp, some of whose speeches were as well worthy of preservation for droll extravagance of incongruity as the best of her famous prototype in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. In addition to her perplexity about the

missing infant, she is further embarrassed as to the exact surname of Mr. Nightingale, whose name she remembers to be that of a bird, but cannot always refer to the correct species of that order. A quotation we make from memory will leave no doubt as to the fertile and singular fancy from whose mint it came:—

'"No, sir, I will not leave the house! I will not leave the establishment without my child, my boy. *My* boy, sir, which he were his mother's hope and his father's pride, and no one as I am aweer on's joy. Vich the name as was giv' to this blessedest of infants and vorked in best Vitechapel mixed upon a pin-cushion and 'Save the mother' likewise, were Abjalom, after his own parential father, Mr. Nightingale, who no other ways than by being guv' to liquor, lost a day's vork at the wheelwright business, vich it was but limited, Mr. Skylark, being veels of donkey-chaises and goats; and vun vas even drawn by geese for a wager, and came up the aisle o' the parish church one Sunday arternoon by reason of the perwerseness of the animals, as could be testified by Mr. Wix the beadle, afore he died of drawing on Vellinton boots to which he was not accustomed, after an 'earty meal of roast beef and a pickled walnut to which he were too parjial! Yes, Mr. Robin Redbreast, in the marble fontin of that theer church was he baptized Abjalom, vich never can be unmade or undone, I am proud to say, not to please nor give offence to no one, nohows and noveres, sir. . . . Ah! 'affliction sore long time Maria Nightingale bore; physicians *was* in vain'—not that I am aweer she had any one in particular, sir, excepting *one*, vhich she tore his hair by handfuls out in consequence of disagreements *relative* to her complaint; and dead she is and will be, as the hosts of the Egyptian fairies; and this I shall prove, directly minute, on the evingdence of my brother the sexton, whom I shall here produce, to your confusion, young person, in the twinkling of a star or humin eye!"

'Scarcely had the old woman quitted the stage when Mr. Dickens reappeared as "my brother the sexton," a very old gentleman indeed, with a quavery voice and self-satisfied smile (pleasantly suggesting how inimitable must have been the same actor's manner as Justice Shallow), and afflicted with a "hardness of hearing" which almost baffled the efforts of his interrogators to obtain from him the desired information as to the certificate of Mrs. Nightingale's decease. "It 's no use your whispering to me, sir," was the gentle remonstrance which the first loud shout in his ear elicited; and on the question being put whether "he had

ever buried"—he at once interrupted to reply that he *had brewed*; and that he and his old woman—"my old woman was a Kentish woman, gentlemen; one year, sir, we brewed some of the strongest ale that ever you drank, sir; they used to call it down in our part of the country (in allusion, you understand, to its great strength, gentlemen) 'Samson with his hair on.' . . . A third character in the farce, sustained by Dickens, was that of a *malade imaginaire*, for the time being under treatment by a new specific, "mustard and milk," the merits of which he could not highly enough extol, but which, nevertheless, was not so soothing in its effects but that the patient gave every minute a loud shriek —explaining apologetically, "That's the mustard!" followed immediately by a still louder one, "That's the milk!" We are afraid to say in how many other disguises our manager appeared, but there was certainly one other, a footman or waiter, in which character the actor gave us a most amusing caricature of the manner of one of his own servants; and we remember with what glee, one night at supper after rehearsal, Dickens learned that the man in question had been heard imitating his master in the part for the amusement of his fellow-servants, in utter ignorance that he himself had sat in the first instance for the portrait.'

Meanwhile, amid all this social stir, Alfred was maturing and quickening his pace towards manhood. Charles Dickens and Frederick Maurice sound incongruous names to couple, yet both played an equal part in his existence. For Dickens was the other great influence which at this, the most impressionable moment, more or less formed Alfred's life and, to some extent, his career. And this is no chance effect of his fortunate contact with the two men, it springs from a deeper cause. For they represent, as it were, his dual nature, the two distinct sides of his character which he always kept strictly apart; on the one hand the sober and spiritual, on the other the humorous and dramatic. In most complex persons the varied elements are so fused that the conflicting threads in the woof are almost indistinguishable. In his case there was never any fusion; there was, instead, a clear-cut contrast, and his differing tendencies ran alongside of each other on parallel roads to the end. Dickens, as we have said, defined and gave

voice to his tastes; Maurice, whose teaching took even stronger hold upon him, satisfied his spiritual instincts and his great need of seriousness; and, early crystallising his beliefs, probably turned his thoughts towards the possibility of taking orders. The counsels of the elder Miss King, whose advice weighed considerably with him, also drew him this way. But the idea came gradually; as yet it had taken no shape, or assumed any permanent hold, and other plans intervened.

Many causes, public and private, made Maurice about this time the most prominent person in his thoughts. When Alfred was sixteen, he left Mr. King's school and proceeded to King's College, London, where Maurice was at that time Professor of Divinity and of English Literature. It was just then, in the year 1853, that his volume of *Theological Essays* appeared. What happened thereupon will be remembered: how the Council of King's College condemned certain passages in the book concerning a future life and eternal punishment as heterodox and harmful, and on that charge dismissed Maurice from his professorial chair. Alfred Ainger's boyish wrath knew no bounds at this catastrophe to the College and to the master who inspired its students—whose only crime had been to rob religion of its terrors and make God more accessible—the man whom he regarded as the revelation of true Christianity. Miss King still remembers how he looked as he came into her room with the first news of the verdict, all his indignation fresh upon him; and how, under the pressure, as it were, of his anger, he suddenly broke into a lightning-flash of verse. He was strong in his defence and in later years he formulated it.

'It is,' he wrote long after, 'a remark of Maurice's own (I forget where) that the man who is most careful about the precise and accurate meaning of the words he uses is sure to be accused by those who do not understand him of juggling with them. This has been his own fate. Because he went back to the fountain-head of Christian doctrine for the primary meaning of life, death, eternal, sin, miracle, and other apparently simple, and really all but unfathomable words, he was supposed by those who were

repelled by his method to be using them in an arbitrary sense of his own, invented by him to justify some foregone conclusion. . . . After all, the key to understanding the writings of Maurice is one of a moral rather than intellectual kind. It is an appreciation of, and sympathy with, his spiritual *temper* which soon finds his language clear and his method reasonable. The often-quoted lines of his favourite Wordsworth are as applicable to him as to the imaginary character of whom they were written—that we must love him, ere to us he will seem worthy of our love. The old editors of Shakespeare had perhaps the same vague idea of which was cause and which was effect, when they used language about their great dramatist which I venture here to apply to Frederick Maurice: "If you do not like him, you are in some manifest danger not to understand him. . . ."'

In these College days, we see Alfred Ainger very much as he was to be, his gifts full-grown, his tastes and qualities almost developed. And that faculty for friendship which was to mean so much to him now began to take a prominent part in his life. At King's College he found two, at least, of his lifelong friends, and another whose own death in middle life alone cut off the intercourse between them. This was William Elderton, already his schoolmate at Mr. King's, a serious-minded, thoughtful lad and the confidant of Alfred's spiritual reflections, who became his chief correspondent when Ainger left town for Cambridge. Of the other two, one was Richard C. Browne, his comrade-at-arms in letters and his literary counsellor, a position which he always retained although he lived away from London; and the last, not the least, was Horace Smith, the dear familiar companion, inseparably linked to Alfred, first here, then at the University, later still at the Temple, where his name is known and loved in many capacities—whether as Bencher or 'Beak'—poet or writer of essays.

'I first,' he writes, 'became acquainted with Alfred Ainger when we met at King's College, London. We were of the same year in College, and of the same age within a month or two. I remember that, at first, before I knew his name, I called him "the whistling boy." He used to perch upon a desk in one of the class-rooms, always in some impossibly contorted attitude, generally whistling a

sonata of Beethoven, or the "Carnival of Venice" with variations, perhaps humming the same in a low, sweet, tenor voice. He was always full of fun, even of some mischief, but he had no physical strength for sports of any kind; and so fragile was he in appearance that people would wonder if he could live through the year. During the three years we were together at King's College, I don't think we did much work, except in the English Literature class, where we were graciously pleased to write essays for Professor Brewer, whom we enthusiastically admired; and we were frequently called upon to read our essays out loud to the class.'

But if he was not garnering many data, he was certainly gathering experience. 'In the lecture-room,' writes another King's Collegian, 'he was rather an observer than a learner. The proceedings were to him in the nature of a spectacle, and the mirth they sometimes afforded him was but too infectious.' Sometimes it was a joke, sometimes an impersonation, sometimes a verse dashed off, that made a whole class helpless with merriment. And his fun, even his mimicry, never offended anybody. Now he would 'elicit shrieks of laughter by his delicately accented reproduction of the way in which a student, entering the College Hall with books under his arm, was wont to look up at the clock—a slighter thing could not be—but it was irresistible, and the original enjoyed it as much as any one.' Now again he would break into a skit on some event of the moment—such as was suggested by seeing 'Mr. —— and Mr. —— engaged in the irrelevant pastime of Tit-tat-to during a lecture.' Ainger instantly wrote on a sheet of paper, scrawled over with mathematical calculations:—

'Life is a game at Tit-tat-to
With all its gains and losses—
But not to all men: some I know
Ne'er meet with aught but crosses.

I know the wise may toil in vain,
And when their labour's past
May profit nothing by their pain;
Tom Fool gets all at last.'

But directly the theme of the academic lecturer had any

connection with Literature, Alfred ceased to be an improvisor, and became a concentrated listener. It was characteristic of him that he only developed upon the lines he had chosen from the first, and that he made no effort to branch out into by-paths of learning. To literature he gave most of his time, both when he worked and when he played. His actual achievements were not so remarkable in this direction as was the maturity of his taste. Charles Lamb he discovered for himself, and early made himself acquainted with every corner associated with *Elia*. Crabbe he already knew and loved, a choice even more unexpected in youth. Contemporary writers—Kingsley, Ruskin, Thackeray, Dickens—naturally absorbed him, and there now came into his ken the poet who was to mean most to him, the poetic influence which certainly most affected him. It was in the early fifties that he came across *In Memoriam*, and felt he had discovered a world. He and his friend, Richard Browne, together with two others, would take the book out on spring afternoons to the terrace of Somerset House and read it together there, 'sitting by the stone lions and looking across the river to the Surrey hills.' And after that some volume of Tennyson's was never far from Alfred's hand.

The other pursuit that absorbed him in his leisure moments was music. Music-haunted he had been since his birth. From first to last beautiful music moved him to a kind of ecstasy; he lived as if on some Prospero's island, surrounded by 'music in the air.' This love, which was apart from performance, would always be surprising in a schoolboy and was doubly so in those early Victorian days, when it was anything but fashionable for men to be musical and it required something like courage for a lad to proclaim himself exceptional. Alfred found two or three companions in this taste and they used to resort together to Fentum's, a music-warehouse in the Strand, there to play and to sing, trying over the music they cared for, Mendelssohn and Schubert and Schumann, to their heart's content. Alfred was usually a listener on these occasions and here laid the firm foundation of that well-stored memory which stood him in good stead through later

years. A gift for the piano, however, was his by nature—a gift which he only used for light purposes. He soon was able to accompany the songs and sketches of his own which he now began to perform. They were sketches in the manner of Corney Grain, or of his greater predecessor, John Parry, whose musical feats delighted Mendelssohn. One of these entertainments of Ainger's, given in youthful days, is memorable. It is one of the audience who describes it[1]:—

'The Rev. Dr. Cumming, of Crown Court, was the interpreter of prophecy most generally acceptable to persons wholly incompetent to deal with the subject. He had, therefore, a very numerous following. He was given to predicting the end of the world at some date near at hand. The date was, from time to time, unavoidably postponed, and it was unkindly remarked that the Doctor had his stock of coal replenished as usual. The approach of the *Great Tribulation* had been announced in his work bearing that title. In one of A. A.'s chronicle songs, the author was commemorated as:—

> "the eminent Low-Church Divine
> Who is putting us up to a proximate sign,
> And tells us, without any ha-ing or hum-ming,
> What a very great Affliction is—*coming!*"

'One evening, the singer had passed to the next verse and was looking at his audience, when into the brighter light around the piano a figure emerged from the comparative gloom. It was the Doctor, who took the matter sensibly and good-humouredly.'

Wherever Ainger went his songs and improvisings seem to have left an echo. He and Horace Smith, who lived in Bayswater, always started on their homeward walk together, and Alfred would be not infrequently persuaded to turn his steps away from St. John's Wood and return to his friend's house. 'He was as full of frolic, fun and noise,' as the 'Country Fair' of which he used to sing. In these days his high spirits simply bubbled up incessantly, although he suffered from relapses at times, possibly from sheer exhaustion. He had frequent headaches and sickness. His power of throwing off these attacks and becoming wildly excited and

[1] Mr. R. C. Browne.

ALFRED AINGER AT EIGHTEEN YEARS OF AGE.

From a photograph by Miss Johnston.

amusing in a moment, was astonishing. Everybody who came into contact with him spoilt him and he was like a spoilt child. If in a mixed company one or two persons were not quite to his taste, he would retire into himself in complete silence; but as soon as these one or two persons left the room, he would jump up, cut most fantastic capers and shout '*now* let us have some fun.'

In his failings, as in his gifts, the boy was father to the man. This wayward moodiness of his, which those who loved him later knew so well, acted from the first like a spell which he himself seemed powerless to break. Even as a boy at school his silences were alarming and his dislikes were apparently unaccountable, dependent on some habit, some gesture, or chance word that offended his fastidious taste; and if he once took objection to a person he did not get over it—his feeling crystallised into prejudice. Never, in these early days, even while he was at the Kings', could he be brought to like the husbands who carried off his friends, and he showed an almost feminine caprice in his attitude towards them.

There was an element of freakishness about him which always made him unique, but which, as the years went on, became softened and mellowed by the sympathies which grew with experience and by the judgment which they brought him. His whims, however, did not mar his lovableness, or the sunny sweetness of his nature. The qualities for which he was spoilt were just those that were beyond spoiling.

The finest memorial and the most impressive that he left behind him at King's College was one which was droller than his play and more truly educational than any academic work. He was, we have said, music-haunted; he was Shakspeare-haunted too. He was a deep and constant reader of the poet, helped, where his ignorance of life limited him, by the actor's insight and an acute literary perception. His Shakespeare readings were never forgotten by his contemporaries, and one who heard them has recorded the effect they produced.[1]

'In 1855, the King's College Shakespearian Society was founded. He was its first President. The readings began with

[1] Mr. R. C. Browne.

Romeo and Juliet (Nov. 25th). He filled the parts of Gregory and the Nurse, and the rendering of the latter was ideal. On December 5th the Society presented *As You Like It,* with A. A. as Touchstone, in the manner of Compton, then the accepted representative of the "fool i' the forest." But it was in *Twelfth Night* that he showed the full power of his interpretation. Sir Andrew Aguecheek was "after" no one except Shakespeare, out of whose page he sprang alive. And his dealing with this character was remarkable in another respect. Excellent as his reading always was, its effect was not unfrequently a little impaired by his amiable desire immediately to share his own exuberant delight therein with his hearers. The indications of this desire were apt to interfere with its realisation. They imparted to the impression produced a certain duplexity, which was *not* stereoscopic. You would gladly have deferred your participation in his pleasure in the interests of his success. This was notably the case with his Dogberry, while he was affording you rapturous glimpses of the depths of the learned constable's stupidity. There came in a glance, or even in a tone, the reader's ecstatic, triumphant question: "Are they not abysmal?" They were; but the question broke the charm of the dramatic situation.

Not so with his Sir Andrew. There A. A. was *totus in illo,* and what admirable fooling it was! what a wealth of suggestion! Your mind's eye saw the loose-hung, limp, shambling figure. You noted the almost pathetic attempts at lively repartee; the haunting suspicion that they missed fire; the feeble rallying to the attitude of what was almost, but not quite, conceit; the occasional gleams of self-knowledge, all unavailing for guidance or encouragement, having only the power to depress that weakly body and flickering mind; all this, and all the so much more in the "foolish knight," lived and moved before you, stirring you to laughter—and to pity.

'For in all A. A.'s renderings, there was (once more to pervert the trite quotation) that "touch of nature" that "makes the whole world kin." The images presented to your mental view were all from "*gentle* Shakespeare" cut—as an engraver copies from an artist. Stephano might be brutal; but he was loyal to the "poor monster." Dr. Caius might be fussy and tiresome; but you felt he was an alien, whose learning and common sense were not discerned by his Windsor neighbours through his broken English, though the ridicule of his wooing might be borne with for the sake of a substantial jointure. Shylock's appeal to the common

humanity was driven home, in spite of a certain lack of physical force in its delivery. This sympathy he allowed to put him at some disadvantage in Jaques, whose inherent rascality he appreciated, but did not fully express. . . . Falconbridge again, was, for him, scarcely a success. He was not convincing when he simulated the robustness of the sturdy Plantagenet. Nor can I recall anything salient in his Cassius.'

Young Ainger's gifts as actor and interpreter were more striking than his literary achievements. His writing did not come so spontaneously, nor was it ever an easy matter to him. His music, indeed all his other faculties, showed a greater facility. And little of his writing is left from these his early years, only what may be found in a small periodical, *Our Paper*, printed for private circulation in 1855, to help the Royal Patriotic Fund, a charity destined for those who had suffered by the Crimean War. There are happy phrases in his contributions—paragraphs, too, worth the quoting, if only to show the influence that Dickens had upon him.

Here, for instance, is his skit on a 'correspondence page' in his essay on 'Penny Literature,' which, unlike so many jokes, has as much point now as then.

'*An enquiring mind.* Yorkshire is a large county in the North of England.

Etymologist. The *i* in China is long.

Augusta Ann is thanked for her beautiful and touching poem, which will appear in our next. Her simile, "like rain-drops pattering upon angel's wings," is singularly happy. She should, however, pay greater attention to orthography. . . .

Chesterfield. Your friend is unintentionally deceiving you. It is *not* etiquette to ask more than three times for soup.

Antiquarian. Milton's father was not a potato-salesman.

Constance B. Slap his face.

A Curate. Tell her business requires you at Hackney.

Received. P.Q., Plato, Berenice, Tomkins.'

Or here is a picture of a rising suburb:

'There are many, not tied to London by business, who like to grasp the country without letting go the town. . . . Ours is a new neighbourhood, one of the growing offshoots of the growing metropolis. . . . Art is contemplating further encroachments

upon Nature. Slices of turf are already cut from the surface, rolled up like jam puddings, and piled in heaps. . . . New roads are permeating in all directions, apparently made of dust-bins, for a substratum of oyster-shells and decayed shoes is plainly visible. An adventurous young lark sometimes comes and sings over the doomed land, but it quickly scents the scent of building, and flies away countryward.'

In another paper, *A Few Musical Friends*, we can trace the future friend of du Maurier as well as the lover of Dickens. Mrs. Spencer Tompkins, 'who herself sings and plays remarkably well,' asks the writer to a little musical party, and he accepts her invitation.

'The torture of dress' (he writes, and the words sound strange from a person of eighteen) 'is not so cruel in these cases as on those other occasions, when we leave home at the time we ought to be going to bed, and return just in time for breakfast; but every earthly pleasure has its alloy. And even music requires its dress-boots. . . .

'. . . It was in the course of this delightful evening, that we discovered that the company present we had assuredly met before. It is true we remembered none of the faces, but with the different types of humanity present we were strangely familiar; and then it struck us for the first time, that these were but representatives of the different classes of musical people, and that others perhaps recognised them as well as ourselves. If, in describing any one of the guests we met at Mrs. Spencer Tompkins's, the reader shall exclaim, "Dear me! how like—," our end will be attained.

'As we enter the room, most of the company have arrived. A knot of young ladies is congregated before the piano, engaged in a little pleasant contention as to who shall open the evening. At length a bolder spirit than the rest volunteers to take part in a duet if she can find a fellow-sufferer to join her. This is soon forthcoming, and the *soirée* is inaugurated by a grand Potpourri from the "Huguenots." The duet is performed amid a din of conversation, which the audience kindly interrupt at the conclusion to applaud. An interval of ten minutes elapses. Then do we not know the diffident young lady, with ringlets, who requires half an hour's persuasion to favour the company—not always on the plea that she has a cold, which superstition seems to be sinking before the stride of civilisation, but for the avowed reason that she "would rather not, dear, please."

However, this seldom avails her, and does not in the present instance, for she is obliged to yield, and remarks that she has left her music downstairs. An assiduous young gentleman immediately leaves the room in search of it, and returns in triumph with an implement resembling a claret-coloured rolling-pin. The diffident young lady, referring to the rolling-pin, which proved to be a case of music, selects a song, and sitting down to the piano, commences "Childhood's Bowers" (composed and respectfully dedicated to the pupils of Mangnall House Academy, by Mr. Savage Brest, R.A.M.) The melody of this song, which was announced by the public press, the day after its first appearance, as "sure to become a favourite," is not soul-stirring, and the words are inaudible; but this last is perhaps all for the best. The diffident young lady begins in a low and tremulous voice, but encouraged by the approbation which follows the first stanza, she gains confidence, and brings the lyric to conclusion with a shake that makes the stoutest man change colour.'

It does not appear that Ainger ever thought of writing as a calling. The stage about this period, and for a short time onwards, was a powerful attraction to him; but though he fitfully considered it as a possible career, his delicate health soon compelled him to abandon any such notion; and when, as was soon to happen, he went to the University, it was the Law that occupied his more serious thoughts. The idea of the Church had for the moment receded, possibly for family reasons, probably because of the vagueness as to a profession felt by most young men when 'the world is all before them where to choose.' It was not that his mind was less serious than before—so much we may learn from a letter that he wrote to his friend, Horace Smith, not long before he left King's College.

'You don't know, my dear fellow,' he writes, 'how glad I am to find you like Kingsley so well. I felt sure you would if you read him, but I doubted whether you would bring yourself to make a beginning. I feel quite convinced myself that both these writers, Kingsley and Maurice, are earnest and sincere in their endeavour to draw people to the Spirit and the truth—feeling what indeed is most manifest, that the English Church is clinging desperately to the letter—and trusting to the bruised reed of forms and conventionalities. Maurice says he is convinced that

a theology which does not correspond to the deepest feelings of our hearts is not a true theology, and I am sure he is right. People say that all speculation and inquiry are futile, nay impious —that we are commanded to receive the truths of the Bible on faith. So we are; and have reason to be deeply grateful that that command was given to us. Since those words, from the lips of God himself, "He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live," changed the whole current of the world's thoughts, and gave to man that hope which, thank God, is his life indeed, now and for ever—nothing but faith ever quickened that command in a man's heart. But there is nothing in the Bible that forbids man to increase his knowledge of his Father in heaven.'

These words, written when he was barely eighteen, might stand for a complete summary of his religious views on the last day of his life. In thought he matured early, but he did not grow much afterwards.

Changes were coming upon him and stern realities. In 1854 Mr. King died suddenly—a personal shock and sorrow, doubled by his sympathy with the daughters of his old friend and master. His faithful heart clung to them, and he was constantly with them, especially with his old companion.

'My dear Gertrude' (he wrote to her, just before he left King's College),—'the twenty-sixth of March is to me a day of peculiar interest. In the first place it is the birthday of a very dear friend of mine, and in the next place it is the anniversary of my first having the pleasure of her acquaintance. For these two reasons, then, I send out to our milkman's and mark this day with the whitest of white chalk.

'Let me then first wish you many, many happy returns of this auspicious day. The phrase is hackneyed, but it seems to me to include every good wish, and I therefore hope you will accept it in its most comprehensive sense.

'Six years ago, this day, I came as a stranger, and you took me in. For three years and three months I was constantly with you, and I do not believe that we were ever at variance for more than two minutes at a time. It seems but yesterday that we, collaborateurs, like Liddell and Scott, or Brady and Tate, elucidated a chorus of Æschylus, or rendered into elegant Latin such sentences as "The pious Queen devours the noble Centurion," or

"Balbus denied that he swallowed the sugar-tongs." . . . Will you oblige me by accepting the accompanying slightest of slight tokens of my friendship and esteem and *omnia verba amandi, aestimandi, diligendi, approbandi—vide* Ainger's *Latin Primer.*'

He was in a mood for reviewing the past. Events were also happening in his family circle which made him feel that life was moving on. In the same year that Mr. King died, his sister Adeline was married to Dr. Roscow and went to live away in Folkestone, a fact which altered home for her brother. His own London life was soon to close for a time —the first chapter was finished. 'At the beginning of Easter term (1856), A. A. was absent,' writes Mr. Browne, 'I think from some slight illness. We had resumed—or were about to resume—our readings of *In Memoriam*, when on April 9th the sharp news fell on us that the poem must be finished without him. He was leaving King's College for Cambridge earlier than we—or possibly he—expected. I wrote to him in some distress. He replied in a letter now before me:—

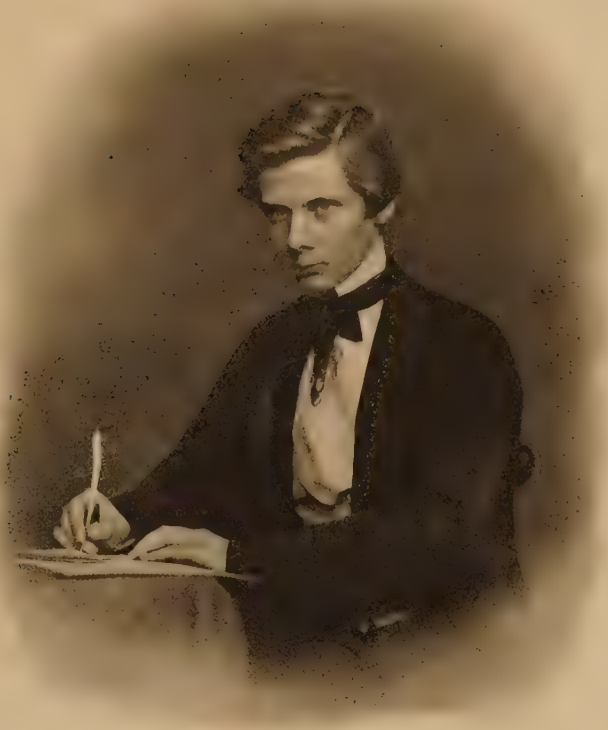
'Your letter and L's have made this a very sad morning to me; and like the girl in the Arabian tale, I hear voices continually calling to me to look back, but with this difference that, when I do, I am very far from being turned into stone.'

Other voices, voices of youth, were urging him to look forward.

CHAPTER II

CAMBRIDGE

'He is a born man of the world.' When Alfred Ainger was twenty-three, this was an old friend's verdict on him. It was unexpected, but it was true. The ease and the grace, sometimes gay, sometimes formal, with which he moved among many sorts of men, his acute perception of their motives and manners, his skill in dealing with them, were his from his start in Cambridge as a freshman at Trinity Hall. But a man of the world and a worldly man are very different persons, and from worldly aims and actions young Ainger was entirely free. His looks, too, were anything but mundane, and perhaps a more striking figure never broke academic conventionalities. 'I try,' says one who knew him then, 'to retrieve and gather up some fragments of those far-away days. The figure that moves through them is very much that which his latest acquaintance knew. The hair was colourless even then, and changed only for the better when it became distinctly white. The face never altered; nor the gait; nor the circular swing out of the left arm; nor the tossing back of the lock that would fall forward; nor the quick, bird-like turn of the head. Time had no power over the steady blue eyes, nor over their glint of merriment heralding the expressive twitch of the mouth, as it delivered some sportful jest or caustic comment.' As for his figure, so strangely convertible, so incorporeal (if the term be allowed us), at one moment altogether fantastic, at another impressively dignified, perhaps nothing better evokes it than his own description, written about now, of the various vicissitudes he put it to. 'In the course of my chequered career, I have slept at different times under a sofa, in an armchair, before the turf fire in a Highland cottage.



ALFRED AINGER IN YOUTH.
From a photograph by Miss Johnston.

Once while reading in my bedroom I fell asleep over the back of the bed, and was found the next morning hanging in that position like fine things airing.'

When Ainger went up to Trinity Hall, Latham and Leslie Stephen were tutors there; Henry Fawcett was a fellow; George Trevelyan, Horace Smith, W. C. Gully, J. E. Gorst, G. P. Bidder, W. Jack (now Professor Jack of Glasgow), and A. W. Ward, the present Master of Peterhouse, were among his university contemporaries. At that time the Crimean campaign was not yet over. The spirit of heroism and self-sacrifice called forth by the war was in the air; sorrow was all around and a feeling of insecurity prevailed. It was a religious moment—when the need of faith and of discipline had come home to the hearts of men, and when such personalities as Maurice, Robertson, and Kingsley were making 'belief' attractive. The love of the spiritual, the reaction against commercialism were evident. Tennyson, Carlyle, and Ruskin were the prophets of the day; in art, the Pre-Raphaelites were rising into prominence, while the *Heir of Redclyffe* was the novel most demanded by the wounded officers in Hospital.

'At that period,' writes Mr. Leslie Stephen, in his *Life of Fawcett*, 'the more sentimental youth learnt Tennyson by heart, wept over *Jane Eyre*, and was beginning to appreciate Browning. If more seriously disposed, he read *Sartor Resartus* and *The French Revolution*; he followed the teachings of Maurice and had some leaning to "Christian Socialism." But there was also an influential set of young men with opposite views. The sterner Utilitarians looked to Mill as their great prophet. They repudiated Carlyle as reactionary, and set down Maurice as muddle-headed.' Ainger belonged heart and soul to the other party, and the two groups had little in common between them.

Such were the intellectual conditions of 1856, and such the mental atmosphere in which Alfred Ainger found himself. At that time entrance scholarships did not exist and the scholarship examination took place at the end of the first year. Ainger was bracketed 'first' with a friend, with whom

he also shared the Chetswode Exhibition, which carried with it the duties of Chapel Clerk. But his triumphs were short-lived. Academic ambitions were not for one whose delicate health soon compelled him to draw in and to renounce the race for honours. For the first two years of his University life he read for a mathematical degree. But it was gradually borne in upon him that mathematics suited neither his taste nor his powers, and in 1858 he finally decided to abandon them and to embrace the Law as his profession.

From the day of his arrival in Cambridge, he made friends in all directions. 'Sunday I breakfasted with Ainger, and in the evening he took tea with me, as also Ward, Jack, Davidson, Bidder'—so runs a passage in the diary of a contemporary.[1] 'That entry,' he tells us, 'recalls those Sunday walks which used to be such delightful incidents of our Cambridge life—walks after breakfast and generally lasting till the afternoon service at Great St. Mary's . . . walks to Madingley, or over the Gogmagogs, or to Byron's Pool, if the day was hot, or in the fens towards Ely.'

Ainger's closest friends were naturally those who thought like himself, but he had others and from different circles. Foremost among these was Henry Fawcett, to whom he often read aloud, and whose gaiety, as well as his courage, endeared him to all who came near him, Alfred not least among them. Nor were all his comrades book-men. 'He loved,' says the same writer, 'the quiet life and the quiet country walk; but none the less . . . he took the keenest interest in all college sports; and so it was that he drew men of all kinds by the attraction of his innate manliness as much as by the charm of his conversation. . . . It was to one of these . . . Henry Davidson, who had achieved greatness as "Stroke" in the Trinity Hall boat, that I owed my introduction to Ainger, at a Trinity Hall boat-supper, which was to me a memorable festival, raised above the level of all other entertainments of the kind, first by a scholarly speech in praise of cricket by Mr. Matthew Kempson . . . but . . . most of all by a recitation by Ainger, descriptive—as I remember well—of the

[1] Dr. H. Birdwood, C.S.I.

sights and sounds of an English fair, which revealed to many of us for the first time, his fine faculty of observation . . . his frolic and abounding sense of humour, and that most precious gift of clear, resonant and sympathetic speech. . . .'

Excepting for the record of such events as these, there is no need to tell the story of his Cambridge days in other words than his own. His letters to William Elderton, who had remained behind at King's College, give the truest picture of his thoughts and doings and are best read in due sequence. He could not at first get rooms at Trinity Hall and took lodgings in King's Parade whence his first impressions are dated.

'*Saturday Evening.*

'My dear Willy, Here I am as comfortably established as if I had been born on the place. I have got capital rooms. . . . I am over a respectable fancy-stationer. . . . I think I shall like the life immensely. . . . The tutor, Mr. Latham, is a capital fellow, most obliging and conversational. . . . I think you would have smiled to see me this morning in chapel in a white surplice which the whole University wears on Sundays and Saints' Days, and gives one the appearance of an angel just out of bed. There is a story afloat of a freshman, who was detected going out to a wine in his surplice, because it was a Saint's Day; but his bed-maker providentially informed him in time. . . . I have got Horace Smith up here.'

'King's Parade, *Friday Night.*

'Having adjusted the furniture, made up the fire, and arranged everything in a snug manner for the evening, I sit down to write to you with infinite satisfaction. I have been writing like a steam-engine this evening, at a book-work paper in mathematics, given me by my tutor, and my brain requires a little friendly gossip to restore it.

'Thank you very much for your speedy reply—I know you will be hard at work, so I cannot expect you to find me much time.

'This is a most delightful life—most various, and most charming. A man can very well choose his "set"; and when he has once picked out his style of friends, he is not interfered with by the others. I know a very large number of men in the University, and am gradually making new acquaintances at my own College.

I am glad to tell you that Trinity Hall, though a small College, stands very high in the opinion of the University, as a nice body of men, and is much respected. It is also high as a boating College; and it holds the second place on the river: St. John's being at the head.

'I have heard to-day of the Celebrated Characters that have been at this College.

'Sterling was here; Selden (the table-talk man); Bulwer Lytton; Lord Chesterfield (I believe) and last, not least, the Rev. F. D. Maurice, who was here for two years, and then migrated to Oxford.—I am becoming quite proud of the institution.

We have got, I think, a very nice set of freshmen up. They seem all very good fellows. Men say that Trinity Hall has the best set this year. One gentleman told me that at his college, they had six freshmen come up, and four of them squinted!

'Ours do not display obliquity of vision; with us, the "lisp" is the prevailing pecularity. I tell my friends that "they lisp in numbers," for which I am very properly scouted by every well-regulated mind.

'You really must come down to Cambridge some time or other. Do come while I am here, and see the Lions. Trinity College Kitchen is not one of the least interesting. The one at the Reform Club is nothing to it. At Trinity they dine six hundred men every day. The head-cook keeps his carriage; and his perquisites are something enormous, making his salary altogether larger than that of the Master of Trinity,—Whewell.

'Cambridge is remarkably full of Churches—you step upon a sacred edifice wherever you turn. At the largest of these Churches, St. Mary's, is preached every Sunday afternoon the University sermon. Different celebrated men are appointed at different times to preach these sermons. Next month, November, our friend Trench is coming down, and I anticipate a great treat. I shall generally go in the evenings to hear Harvey Goodwin, the author of *Goodwin's Course of Mathematics*, which I dare say you know; he preaches in his Parish Church here, and preaches remarkably well.

'I don't know that there is anybody you know here besides old Horace, whom I see constantly.

'Write again soon, old boy, and tell us all you are doing, what you have been reading, and etc. I will return the compliment whenever I can find time. I have been reading again that grand Epic, *Alton Locke*; which I find I have been rather underrating.

It is most fine in parts. The chapters about Cambridge have a fresh interest for me now. I have also read a splendid sermon of Kingsley's called *The Message of the Church to the Working-man.* I don't know that you would like it. It tends to put men on an equality, which I think you would find a difficulty in stomaching, my blessed tory friend.

'I have just finished *Philip II.*, and to my taste, I think, for sustained interest and graphic, nay, even brilliant narration, it will bear comparison with any history I know.

'Don't tell the fellows at College that you have heard from me this time; for I have not written to Browne yet, and he may think me neglectful—I am going to write to him.—Believe me, ever your affectionate friend, ALFRED AINGER.'

'CAMBRIDGE, *Saturday Night.*

'I repeat, I am going to write you a most idiotic note,[1] for I feel dull and stupid, and unfit for anything but my pillow. Many thanks for your speedy response to my last. If I might suggest any alteration in your letters (which are otherwise immaculate), I would mention that they might be a *little* longer; and they would possess very great interest to me, if you would tell me of anything that has struck you particularly in the course of the last week; or since you wrote last; any opinions you may have formed, any you have changed, anything you have seen in a new light, etc., etc. I intend always to do this to you; and I hope you will do it to me.

'I saw Proctor yesterday. He told me he had heard from you and he mentioned the premium you offered for an essay. It is worth trying for—I think I shall go in for it.

'Nothing of any importance has occurred, I think, since I last wrote. There have been some boat-races this week, which I witnessed from the bank of our beloved river. A boat-race is the most exciting thing you can imagine. I will not attempt to describe it, for it has been done admirably in *Alton Locke,* in the chapter headed "Cambridge." I will lend you the tale, if you have not had it, when I am up at Christmas.

'After the race yesterday, there was an amusing incident, which afforded considerable merriment to those not concerned in it. A ferry-boat which was crossing the river had taken a great many too many men on board, and she had hardly left the bank, when

[1] 'Ah, poor dear, he is much the same.'—W. A. E.

she began gradually to settle down. About fifteen men took to the water. Some of them, freshmen, not knowing the depths of that classic ditch, the Cam, plunged vigorously in, thinking to swim to the shore. But the water only came up to their waists; and a Trinity Hall gentleman, of great length, who was one of the sufferers, appeared when in the middle of the stream, only as if he were in a footbath. But if you can conceive a number of young men, in every conceivable costume, of every conceivable colour, wading about in a narrow stream amid shrieks of laughter from the banks, you will picture a spectacle, highly gratifying, as I before observed, to those—not in the water.

'I am thinking of writing a poem on this spirit-stirring subject, beginning:

"Toll for the brave,"

after Cowper.

'Richard Chenevix Trench preached here last Sunday. The result, I am very sorry to say, was universal disappointment. I have not been able to find one man yet who could discover what the Sermon was about. It is needless to say, *I* could not. He chose, too, one of the grandest and deepest texts in the New Testament. The 1st verse of 1st chapter of St. John. And he talked a great deal about St. Augustine; but any more I cannot tell you. He attracted an enormous congregation by his reputation as a writer; but there will be a great falling off to-morrow. I confess I think Trench's forte is rather as a linguist and an etymologist—and, I would add, as a writer of very sterling English—than as a Divine.

'I cannot agree with you and Mackay that Kingsley and Tennyson are "imitators" of that other gentleman (F. D. Maurice). I rather think that both these writers had shewn the tendency of their teaching to the world before the other. But whether or no, there is so much distinctness of form, if there is the same end sought, in these writers, that I cannot hold that they are anything but original.

'Perhaps you may say that Kingsley takes and applies to the concrete what M. and others have taught in the abstract. I believe that this is so; and *Alton Locke* appears to me the most searching and the most earnest application of the laws of Christ to the present condition of society, that I ever read in fiction.

'The more I read, and the more I see of the world, the more am I convinced that the great secret of the faithlessness of this age is in the separation of classes. I often think of those lines

your sister wrote one evening at Blindley Heath; and think how they express a great national want. So long as the rich and the poor are separated, by mutual pride and by the covetousness of the rich and the envy of the poor, so long, I say, there will never be a lively faith felt by this nation in the words of Christianity.

'And those whose worldly interest it is to keep them separated —those traducers; those διάβολοι, to use the name which the Greeks gave to the Father of Lies; whether it be the mob-orators, who tell their poor fellow-men that the rich are all tyrants, are all vicious, dissolute, and sordid, or whether it be the delicate-handed political economist, who says the "Masses" must be kept down— why these do a wickedness, the results of which are quite incalculable; and they will answer it before a Higher Court than they can be arraigned before on Earth.

'The rich should know how much of virtue there is among the poor—virtues, moreover, which the rich truly have need to exercise. They should know how much of sorrow, of suffering, of patient endurance, of family love, strengthened too often by a community of hunger and destitution, there is in a world of which they have no experience. And the poor need just as much to be told that gentlefolks who ride in their carriages are not, of necessity, exempt from all cares; that both rich and poor have their sources of joy and grief; that both must be perfected by suffering if they would enter the mansions prepared for them.

'And now I really must finish, or I shall make the letter overweight, and I am sure it is not worth twopence.

'If you love me, tear this up directly, or burn it. . . .—Ever your affectionate friend, ALFRED AINGER.'

'*Thursday Night, Nov.* 20, 1856.

'I have just returned from dining with the Master of Trinity Hall, who is a hospitable old bird, and has all the freshmen to dine with him every Michaelmas Term. Horace Smith remarking to me after dinner that he had heard from you, I asked him, if your letter contained nothing private, if he would let me see it. . . . And I feel myself obliged, though it is not my turn to write, to tell you how much I enjoyed it, and at the same time how much of it surprised me.

'I think that what you say of a too exclusive study of the writers and the train of thought induced by the day in which one lives, is very just, and worthy of much remembrance. We are too apt selfishly to confine our attention to our own day, and neglect

to seek the great method of understanding it, and all time, by studying other times, and the men they produced. But still there is this to be said, that every man (always of course after the great object of his existence) is to live for his own time, and for succeeding times, and that therefore he does well to study those Seers of the day, whoever they be, who may interpret to him those failings and those yearnings—those doubts and heart-sinkings which the contemplation of his existing time will have produced in his heart. "Why is it," says Kingsley, "that the latest poet has generally the greatest influence over the minds of the young? Surely not the mere charm of novelty? The reason is that he, living amid the same hopes, the same temptations, the same sphere of observation as they, gives utterance and outward form to the very questions, which, vague and wordless, have been exercising their hearts."

'I am sure it must be this which causes me to have so intense an admiration of Tennyson, and a feeling towards *In Memoriam*, which is like an affection towards a personal friend, because I found in it an expression of so many of the doubts and difficulties which have beset me at different periods of my life. But I agree with you that that is not enough, that man's mind must be trained, and his nature fed by the knowledge of other times, that he may acquire an experience (the living experience of men and women before him), which he may apply to the time in which he is placed. So far, so good. But now, I confess that I do not know how you have got the notion that Tennyson gives to reason a higher place than to faith. As far as I have understood the poem, in *In Memoriam* he does exactly the reverse to this. I have not the poem by me; but numbers of passages crowd upon me, to say the reverse to what you say. I believe that in one place he talks of faith—"and reason, like the younger child." I am quite certain that if you read it again you will find that he considers faith as the highest lore of the human intellect, and that in this, as in everything else, in the words of Bacon, we conquer by obeying.

'I will undertake to convince you of this in five minutes, with the poem in my hands. Again, I do not, with you, look upon Tennyson in the light of a dreamy, or enervating poet. I believe that, rightly read, he is as eminently a practical teacher in his way as Shakespeare. . . .

'Again, thank you for your letters. I assure you that, placed as I am out of the pale of any literary thought, I learn much and think much by their aid. . . .

'I send you herewith the *Idylls of the King*. . . . Their merits are very great, and greater than any one would suppose who had not some acquaintance with that large cycle of romances which formed almost the only popular literature of the feudal times. The immense value of these old romances is not so much in their intrinsic merits. The great interest they have for us is rather from the people who first read them, than from those who wrote them. . . . They show us the rude virtues and the rude vices. They do not, it is true, exhibit one of the fundamental evils of the time—the degradation of the lower class, the great body of villeins—and therefore in some respects it is not a true picture. But it is evident that the ideal of a gentleman was in the minds of the knightly readers, and when we read of the bravery, the truth, the chastity, the gallantry, and the scorn of all that is mean, that is held up for imitation in these romances, we may be inclined to blush for our more minute civilisation, which with its many refinements and improvements has lost some of its broader and healthier features. . . . The third and fourth idylls are, I think, the best. The fourth and last is perfect. If you have an opportunity, read them aloud, and so lose none of the effects of the versification. (N.B. *Private.*) Don't read the "Vivien" aloud. There are certain passages in it which are not pleasant to read before ladies, though the poem itself is perhaps more powerful than any of the others. There is more of the Shakspeare-mind in it.'

'CAMBRIDGE, *Monday Night.*

'The constancy with which you answer my letters, in the midst of all your hard work, is most good of you—and I feel compelled to write to you yet once more, though I shall be in London, I hope, this day week.

'I am tired to-night, and feel very disinclined for reading: and had "I the tediousness of a king, could find it in my heart to bestow it all on your worship."——

'The principal new character that I have become acquainted with since I have been up, is that of Socrates. Have you ever read any Plato? You will be filled with admiration of the philosophy of that old Athenian, who knew the soul was immortal, and met his death without a pang. The practical nature, and the conscientiousness of his arguments are wonderful. There are strong points of resemblance between Socrates and Bacon, in the method in which they conducted the search after truth. Both

effected a reformation in philosophy, both brought down vague and intangible theories to an investigation of existing things—though one was the reformer of moral philosophy and the other of physical. We will have a glance at some of the Socratic methods, some day.

'"My dear Mary, I will now conclude——"

'"That 's raythe a sudden pull up; ain't it?" said Mr. Weller.

'"I don't know," said Sam, "she 'll wish there was more, and that 's the great art of letter-writing."—Dear Willy, ever yours,

ALFRED AINGER.'

The following note is to his old friend, Gertrude King, and belongs to these early Cambridge days:—

'Sunday evening, a time which calls up before me the pleasantest evenings of my life. You are all constantly in my thoughts, but this is a time when regrets are hardest to be dispelled. Sunday is a very delightful day to me here. The extreme quiet after the noise of the week is refreshing. . . . Everything goes on much the same. I like the life very much indeed, and don't know that I was ever happier. I know an immense number of men in the university, but I do not find myself incommoded by them.—Believe me, your affectionate brother,

ALFRED AINGER.'

The bachelor formality of the last phrase—piquant from one so young and social—and the wistful tenderness of the opening words are alike characteristic of the writer. In spite of all his fun, he made a serious impression on his contemporaries. 'A true man,' says one of them,[1] 'who might in any circumstances be relied on to do what was right, nor count the cost—a man firm of purpose, reverent, and loveable.' And his thought and his character were one. There is a passage from a University essay of his, sent, like the letters that follow, to his regular correspondent Elderton, the set thought of which is typical of the man.

'TRINITY HALL, *Sunday Evening, Nov.* 1857.

'. . . There are some writers at the present day who look back with an excess of veneration to the reign of Elizabeth. The time has yet to come when England shall fully recognise the worth of the Puritans. In this remark, be it observed, we

[1] Mr. Birdwood.

say nothing against the worthies—the Raleighs and Sidneys of Elizabeth's reign. The essentially practical character of the monarch gave a work—a high and ennobling work—to her devoted servants, and directed that wild fervour and restlessness which under another ruler might have proved a dangerous element. But the men of the time are seen by us in the light of the time, and win a glory from the national prosperity. It is in the same country, in adversity and mourning, that we look back on the Puritans, fighting strongfully and prayerfully in her defence. Divested of all the brilliancy with which it shone when Shakspeare wrote and Drake fought, the reformed religion had still more surely to prove its strength and endurance in the time of the Stuarts. The man who fought most bravely, prayed most earnestly, counselled the most wisely in those times was Oliver Cromwell.

'. . . We are going to do Mozart's *Requiem Mass* at the Musical Society next week. Sterndale Bennett is coming down to conduct. As the choruses are very hard, I shall not sing in it, but place myself in a snug corner of the hall, with the vocal score in my hands, and enjoy myself immensely. It is a sublime Mass.'

'CAMBRIDGE, *Sunday Night, Nov.* 17.

'. . . You know what Swift says:—

'"That is excellently observed," say I, "when I meet with an opinion that agrees with mine."

'In this way, I say your remarks are most just and most far-seeing. . . . With regard to the consequences of a reformation in religion it was quite necessary that there should be corresponding reformations in Philosophy and Politics, or any other branch of knowledge. The emerging from darkness into light disclosed to men many things, besides their true relation to their God. You know my favourite old doctrine that true faith instantly places a man, as it were, upon a height, from which he has an infinitely wider view than the many who are wandering through life without a clue. The Bible was a key to an infinite number of problems, which, without it, must have remained unsolved to this day.

'What you say of the difference between the religion of ancient times and our own, deserves more notice. Maurice, in his lectures on the religion of Ancient Rome, has shown how the bond which held the votaries of that religion together, was the common Fatherhood, which was the foundation of it. Man was bound

to his fellow-man by the ruling faith in an infinite power, of whose nature and attributes there was no difference of opinion. The religion was false, but it had this power of binding men by an artificial chain; which was only to be broken when the true Faith began its certain and steady growth.

'Maurice shows that whatever there was of greatness, of nobility, of disinterested faith in the religion of Ancient Rome, had its origin in a common Fatherhood.

'This is, indeed, exactly what you say, applied to the particular instance. "Unity is strength" is a truth, in a deeper, more universal sense than the other maxim, "Union is strength." You see it is an eternal fact that there can be no union among men, if only that which unites them is something in themselves. The bond that encircles them is no true bond if it does not bind them *to* something. Pray forgive me for merely interpreting your own words, but it is a great pleasure to me to work out for myself what is good of another man.

'The tendency of this age *is* divergent rather than convergent. We go on straggling into numberless paths, and bye-paths, and get away from the high road—lose ourselves. God grant we may all of us find our way back; yet here again comes in the absence of "Unity," the cause, as I believe, of all the world's troubles. I believe, with you, that the Trinity in Unity is the highest form of a Universal Truth—the unity of all good men—the unity of all that is true; of all that is beautiful; of all that is good; of all that is evil; so that, as we came to see it more clearly, the boundary mark between what is good and what is vicious would become more and more defined; and the true rights of all men would be more clearly acknowledged. This, I believe, is what we are in too much danger of forgetting.

'This is awfully metaphysical, and I dare say you have not any idea what I mean. Write and tell me. . . . I find that in one of the sentences in this letter, at least, I am perfectly unintelligible. I mean the one about unity. My meaning is that if we could more distinctly see the unity of the good; that is, the same nature pertaining to all things good; and also a common nature existing in all things evil; there never would be a blending of the two, and a man would never want an amalgam of the two, but would instantly separate them and find their parts in any substance, as King Hiero did with the Crown.

'I fear I am talking egregious bosh—but I think I have some faint idea of what I mean.'

Ainger very seldom read modern books of thought that went against his own opinions—perhaps we should rather say temperament. His mind was of so strong a 'complexion' (to use an old word) that it hardly acknowledged the presence of belief discordant with his own. When, however, *The History of Civilization* appeared, he made an exception and read it.

'I am going to read Buckle's book'—he says.—'It is very well reviewed in the *Edinburgh* by Sir James Stephen's son. I believe Buckle is the representative of the positive philosophy school in England. There is no God, and Buckle is his prophet.'

'CAMBRIDGE, *Saturday Evening, May* 9, 1858.

'. . . And now you will be surprised, I know, to hear that I have given up mathematics, and am reading Law, in which I shall take my degree. My reasons for this step were several. I never cared for mathematics; I have not the mathematical power to take a good degree; on the other hand, Law, History, and such subjects I always took a great interest in, and when I leave Cambridge I shall have acquired, I hope, something of Law, which I should have had to read subsequently. So I am devoting my energies to Roman Law: Gaius and Justinian, and English Constitutional History. We have a Law Professor at Trinity Hall, and I attend his lectures. As yet I like the change immensely. . . .

'I see —— is a moderate tory, and unless a man is to be of no party, which is impossible, I suppose he had better be that than anything.'

A 'moderate Tory,' 'if anything,' was what Ainger always remained, but politics were not his strong point. He turned away from them with weariness, and could no more be brought to take an interest in them than in anything else that was not natural to him. In his eyes they meant dust and futility, and a less public-spirited person, except in moral questions, it would perhaps be hard to find. Even University affairs, such as the discussion about abolishing religious tests, which was agitating Cambridge when Ainger first came there, find no mention in his letters, and the brief extracts that follow

contain the only political allusions to be found in his early correspondence.

'I do not know what's to become of the new ministry. Coalition is a very good thing, if the various members can agree; and I hardly see how Pam, Lord John and Gladstone are to work in the same crew. The last-named gent voted for the late ministry, and now takes office with the conspirators who overthrew it. All this finesse and plotting is rather dismal to contemplate, while all Europe is in a blaze.'

'I assure you that your fortnightly letter is one of my pleasantest anticipations at College, and, indeed, wherever I am. I wish I knew more about politics; but what you said about Peel seems to have given me some idea of a man, of whose character I was before profoundly ignorant. I have, I fear, left your letter behind me at College, for I should like to have it by me. I forget if you asked me any questions. I will ask you one in return (*à la* Quaker): "What is the difference between a cow and a ricketty chair?" "Because one gives milk and the other gives whey!"'

Riddles, more congenial than politics, were always a favourite game of his. To the end their ingenuity amused his brain, and his letters to Elderton are full of them and of verbal quips.

The last letter and the three that follow are written in vacation time, from London; the fourth from his sister's home at Folkestone.

'23 Carlton Hill, *Sunday, August* 27.

'. . . I have no law to occupy me, and shall, I hope, get through some work the next few weeks. There is not much temptation to leave the house. Everybody, it is needless to say, is out of town, and the neighbourhood looks as if it had gone to bed and forgotten to get up again. . . .

'"Nothing is so difficult as a beginning," says Byron, and the truth, I vow, never appeared to me so clear as now. I don't know really what to tell you—I have been reading Carlyle's *French Revolution*; a wonderful book it is; quite Thomas's masterpiece. You should read it. I have also been airing my English History

by means of Hume, with whom I become more and more disgusted, he being, as I think, shallow and flippant,

'I have been to see Robson in the burlesque on *Medea*—a combination of the most harrowing tragedy and the most ludicrous farce — the result being the Sublime-ridiculous with no step between. I must read it to you some day—

'Everybody is cutting away from the Modern Babylon—Luard goes to-day—I have seen him lately, and Moore, and Heath, and Darlington, and some other of our old friends. Excuse this Electric-jerky, fragmentary style of Epistolary correspondence, which you must attribute to the Electricity in the atmosphere, I suppose. Anything like original composition is a preposterous attempt. I looked in Cook's letter-writer to see if he suggested anything. The only examples I could find were "a letter to a lady proposing marriage" (beginning "Madam"); and "from a father to a gentleman apprenticing his son to the oil and Italian business," in neither of which could I find any help in my present wants.

'I am going to see Piccolomini in the *Traviata*. Your sisters will tell you that she dies in a consumption on the stage. Shocking, is it not? The *Decline* of the Drama I call it—after this, I had better perhaps shut up.—Ever yours,

'Alfred Ainger.'

'*PS.*—Remember me most kindly to all your circle.

'*P.PS.*—Write soon.

'(2) *PS.*—Give us a little intelligence in your next letter. Your last was singularly slight. Quite an ice-wafer of a letter.

'(3) *PS.*—The kitchen fire is just gone out; and the mutton is hung on a tree to roast.'

'*Monday Morning, August.*

'Many thanks for your long and literary letter. You say you cannot tell why I call Hume shallow and flippant. I'll tell you.

'1. He gives us facts, but seems unable to see real motives. He rarely looks deeper than the surface of men's actions. If they are from religious motives, I always find a lurking sneer, and something murmured about superstition (you know Hume was a Sceptic). His history always sounds to me more like a story-telling, with little or no analysis of men or minds. You may think (and I 'm not at all sure that you 're not right), that it is a merit in an historian to tell his tale and leave you to form your own judgments. At all events we are accustomed to find

some analysis in our historians; and a want of it shows, I think, a lack of earnestness on the part of the historian. You are mistaken in thinking that Macaulay is my model historian. I believe that to those who do not like the trouble of judging for themselves (and according to Puff in the *Critic* these are very small indeed), he is by no means to be recommended.

'The *Travestie* from *Medea* does not come direct from Euripides. The story was dramatised by the French Legouvé, the Italian Montenelli, the English Thomas Williams; and lastly burlesqued by Brough. This polyglot story is thus alluded to in the Burlesque:—

> "Sangue, Sangue, spezziar, spezziar suo cuore"
> Which means, translated, something red and gory.
> "Anche di spavento atroce strano"
> Murder in Irish! no! Italiano.
>
> "αἰαῖ·
> διά μου κεφαλᾶς φλὸξ οὐρανία
> βαίη· τί δέ μοι ζῆν ἔτι κέρδος;"
>
> "Stop! that's Euripides. 'Du sang, du sang,
> Briser, torturer son cœur—' That's wrong.
>
> I've got confused with all these various jinglish;
> 'Thunder and Turf' and even that's not English."
> etc. etc. etc.

'I have been reading that wondrous Allegory, the *Fairy Queen*. I wish I had you by me to explain some of it, as you have had the advantage of Brewer's interpretation. Some of the Allegory is of course clear enough, but most of the secondary allusions, and the intricate windings in the history of Protestantism escape my knowledge. There was one thing I came upon which, as I believe is the case with all true geniuses, has a far wider truth than was ever meant. It is where Una and the lion go about wandering in search of the knight—showing how it is Truth (and therefore Strength) that are always seeking man; and not man seeking truth. That we have no power to raise ourselves to the truth, but only to admit the truth into us—Bacon's eternal saying, that "we conquer by obeying." How infinitely indebted we are to that reign of Elizabeth. I believe that Bacon, Spenser, Hooker, Shakespeare, etc., have done more to interpret the Bible, and make us more and more convinced of the eternal truth of the Gospel, than ever Mr. Scott, and that respectable firm, Doyley and Mant did. God knows we have much to learn yet.

'You apologise for prosing. Now we are quits. . . . I remain, ever yours, ALFRED AINGER.'

'23 CARLTON HILL, ST. JOHN'S WOOD.

'. . . I quite sympathise with you in your remark about Emerson. I always arise from reading one of his essays with an un-satisfied sense of incompleteness. His yearnings after the truth are founded evidently on no sound insight into things. There is much that I admire, much that is original and striking, but your definition is a true one,—uncomfortable. . . .

'Our housemaid was good enough to inform me yesterday that she considered *Henry VIII.* and the *Winter's Tale* two of the weakest of Shakespeare's plays. Rather good that, wasn't it?

'One doesn't expect literary criticism for twelve pounds a year.'

'FOLKESTONE, *Wednesday Morning.*

'. . . On Monday I read *Much Ado.* I was much surprised at its great success. I little thought a Folkestone audience would have shown such appreciation of Shakespeare's wit. Every speech of Benedick and Beatrice "told," and as to Dogberry and Verges, they caused convulsive laughter on all sides. I will send you a review of that, when one appears. On Thursday I am to read the *Tempest,* and am engaged in studying it now. . . .

'We have dreadful literary fights in this house. There are so very few writers on whom my sisters and I agree. Emerson, in particular, is a great bone of contention. I depreciate him on every occasion, and the rest of the family idolise him. I believe he is little more than a clever dresser-up of commonplaces.

'I have got a fancy that Dogberry is a fair specimen, in many respects, of a Unitarian; that delicious self-conceit—"Good old man, he will be talking," and the general air of superiority over his superiors is very Socinian. You have not seen much of their society, as I have.'

'CAMBRIDGE, *Monday Night.*

'I take my first opportunity of writing you a connected letter that has been presented to me since I received your last.

'Thank you very much, old fellow, for your long letters—I assure you they are a great treat to me, and that I learn much from them. Placed as I am here, alternating the chaff and gaiety of college gossip with the rigid analysis of mathematical investi-

gation, I become at times chilly-minded and careless; and such episodes as your letters are most delightful to me. There are legions of problems which no algebra can solve.

'I shall be in London, I hope, on the fifteenth—we shall have not a little to talk about.

'I have more opportunity of seeing the clergy in plain clothes (if I may use the expression), I mean in their un-official capacity, here in Cambridge than ever I had before—it is rather amusing and curious.

'I am beginning to have a glimpse of the manner in which the body of clergy is recruited, and the previous lives of those who enter it. I was sitting the other day in Hall, next to a fellow freshman, a dandy gentleman of the name of Harris, who dresses within an inch of his life (the Harris-tocrat of our College I call him; but that is a digression), and he mentioned casually that he had been for two or three years in the army, and was now going to enter the ministry. As I felt quite convinced from the character of the man, that he had not resolved upon so singular a change from a conviction of the great privileges of a minister, I ventured to ask him the cause. He told me deliberately that there was a living in his family, and that it was a pity it should be wasted! And that is the way, Sir, that our ministry is kept up. Right tol loral, loral! Such is life.

'I shall be glad to hear more of the Shakesperian. Tell me what plays they have read this term; and which have been most successful. I should like to join them again. If they have another play this term, after the fifteenth, I shall have great pleasure in reading. If Wednesday the 17th is a reading day, I will be there . . . How are they all at home? . . .—Believe me, ever your affectionate friend, ALFRED AINGER.'

'*PS.—Ainger's last* (*quite* private). One of our men told me the other day that he had discovered that our classical lecturer uses a Translation in class. "Ah," I replied, "The ass knoweth its master's *crib*," *vide* first lesson of last Sunday morning.'

His wit had meanwhile found a fresh outlet in the new *University Magazine*.

CHAPTER III

THE LION

'A NEW magazine is about to be started in Cambridge. It emanates from Trinity, but is open to contributions from the whole University. Horace Smith and myself have been asked to contribute, and we intend doing so.'

So wrote Ainger in 1858, and shortly after his letter there appeared the first number of the *Lion*. The *Eagle*, which still survives as the organ of St. John's College, had hitherto been the most prominent magazine in the University. But the *Lion* had more ambitious aims, and the introductory statement of its purposes took a high flight. It was to fill a need as yet unsatisfied in the University world; it was to be earnest in tone, witty in expression, and Catholic in the topics that it treated; no mere college affair, but open to contributions from all the undergraduates of Cambridge. Among these, as we saw, were some who, as enthusiasts for Tennyson and followers of Maurice and Kingsley, wished to see religious earnestness united to broad sympathies and to poetic culture —although culture for culture's sake was by no means what they approved of. There were undergraduates of that time who felt no such limitations, but they were to be found in a very different circle, the set of brilliant free-lances who 'proved all things' and held fast that which was intellectual. They centred round George Trevelyan and Henry Sidgwick, and were not at all in touch with the thought and aims of the Mauricians, whom they looked upon as too solemn and too 'Philistine.'

The most active spirit of the first of these two groups was, perhaps, H. R. Haweis of Trinity. He it was who originated the *Lion*, for which paper he also wrote; while Alfred Ainger,

Horace Smith, and A. W. Ward were the chief among his fellow-contributors. The first number, which had the 'defects of its qualities,' was greeted with much laughter and some youthful arrogance from the other party, nor did they stop there. Almost at once appeared the *Bear*—a parody of the *Lion*, created by George Trevelyan—a sparkling farrago of gifted fun, more effective than its butt, but neither so mature nor so interesting. However, it achieved its end, and, though there was but one number, it killed the poor *Lion*, which was only issued twice and died after its second venture. Sir George Trevelyan's *Dionysia* followed the *Bear*, but it lasted no longer than its predecessor, and the brisk little battle between the *coteries* was not resumed on paper. But it has seemed worth while to rescue from oblivion a few of Ainger's contributions to the dead *Lion*—his first-published study of Shakespeare, together with one or two sallies of his humour that appeared in its short-lived pages. They stand by themselves and may be given without further comment.

JACQUES

A SHAKESPERIAN STUDY

'The historians of the present day are busily engaged in setting aside the verdicts that have been passed on by-gone characters. Mr. Carlyle has found it his mission to vindicate Cromwell: Mr. Froude is telling us that Henry the Eighth was really not so bad a fellow after all. We have chosen our personage from the page of Shakespeare and hope to shew that the hero of the "Seven Ages" is not whiter than he is painted, but blacker—in fact, that he has won himself a good name without having deserved it.

'"Mine be a philosopher's life in the quiet woodland ways," says Tennyson in his last poem, perhaps thinking of Jacques in the forest, and adopting the most common view of his character. Mr. Hallam speaks of the "philosophic melancholy" of Jacques, and this is the quality for which the world has generally given him credit. We shall take the liberty of examining his claims to our admiration, and, following the example of modern sermons, divide our subject into three heads. We have to examine the nature of the philosopher's early life; his present disposition, as

exhibited in his own conduct and language; and the opinion entertained of him by his "co-mates and brothers in exile."

Firstly, then, Jacques has been a courtier. He has passed all his days in the unwholesome atmosphere of a Court. The petty, truckling nature of this life is plainly declared by Touchstone in the last act of the play, and is indeed hinted in many other passages. With this training, and his limited knowledge of human nature, he offers, when driven into exile, to "cleanse the foul body of the infected world, if they will patiently receive his medicine." The good Duke, feeling the presumption of this speech, says, "Fie on thee, I can tell thee what thou wouldst do." "Well," says Jacques, "what for a counter would I do but good?" The Duke replies—

> "Most mischievous foul sin in chiding sin,
> For thou thyself hast been a libertine
> As sensual as the brutish sting itself;
> And all the embossed sores and headed evils,
> Which thou with licence of free foot hast caught,
> Wouldst thou discharge into the general world."

'Such then has been the life of Jacques, before we make his acquaintance. He is hardly a man, we think, very well qualified to instruct mankind: unless indeed, on the principle that a reformed drunkard makes the best apostle of temperance, some one should urge that a reformed sensualist is calculated to produce the best philosopher, forgetting that a man must have many other qualifications before he is fitted to teach his fellows.

'If we may judge Jacques by his words, we find that everything he says evinces a most intense selfishness. It is remarkable that Shakespeare has made Jacques and his companions express their opinion on the same subjects, as if to shew their distinctive difference. Jacques offers, in his pettish manner, to "rail against our mistress the world, and all our misery." We all know what the good Duke says on this head:

> "Sweet are the uses of Adversity,
> Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
> Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

And, as we should expect, the Duke does not suit Jacques at all. When one of the lords tells Jacques that the Duke has been seeking him, the philosopher replies, "And I have been all this day to avoid him. He is too disputable for my company. I think

of as many matters as he; but I give Heaven thanks and make no boast of them."

'When we first read this speech we are quite at a loss to understand it, for during the short time we have known him the Duke has as little of the disputable in him as any one we can imagine. However, in the next scene, when we find how thoroughly the Duke knows Jacques, and how readily he tells him his opinion of him, it is easy to see why Jacques avoids his company. In the dialogue between Jacques and Orlando in Act III., when the philosopher proposes to sit down and abuse mankind, Orlando says, "I will chide no breather in the world but myself, against whom I know most faults." Orlando goes on to say that he holds Jacques to be either "a fool or a cypher." Now Jacques is not a fool. He displays all those absurdities into which an overweening conceit leads a man, but he has withal a quick and brilliant fancy. I mention this because many will say that the celebrated speech of "the Seven Ages of Man," and the apostrophe of the wounded stag, are inconsistent with the character as we have interpreted it. Now, the first of these speeches is merely a burst of fancy, which might have been delivered by Mercutio when in a serious vein (if that chronic wit ever had a sober interval). Indeed, we think that the "Seven Ages" is remarkably indicative of the mind of the speaker. It is purely sensual. It does not turn upon the development of mind and character in the growing man; it contains no hidden philosophy on the weakness and failings of humanity; but the idea is expressed merely in a series of pictures of external life, as they occur to the eye of the speaker. We see that it would be incorrect in the mouth of any other moralist or wit in Shakespeare. The second of the episodes we have alluded to, viz. the "Wounded Stag" we cannot detach from our view of Jacques' character. When he says, "thus misery does part the flux of company"; and afterwards as "the careless herd full of the pasture jumps along by him, and never stays to greet him": when he adds, "Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens, 'tis just the fashion; wherefore do you look upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?" all this seems to us (perhaps we are wrong) only another reflection upon himself; another murmur at his own misery, at being forced into exile. And then he winds up with some mawkish, false sentimentalism about the tyranny of the exiles in the forest in killing the deer for food. Depend upon it, that if his friends in the forest of Arden had acted upon this suggestion, Jacques would

have been the first to grumble when he sat down to dinner, and found no venison on the bill of fare. It will be seen that we are determined to take away all reality from the man, when we say that there are very evident proofs that the melancholy of Jacques is assumed. In the first place, constitutional melancholy—hypochondria—is a disease for which a man deserves the sincerest pity. If this were Jacques' affliction, we should not find his friends twitting him with it, nor Jacques himself boasting of it. When Jacques, in a very offensive manner, is calling on Amiens, to "sing more, I pr'ythee, more!" Amiens (we can fancy him with a roguish twinkle in his eye) says, "It will make you melancholy, Monsieur Jacques." The hypochondriac replies, "I think it: more, I pry'thee, more: I can suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs; more, I pr'ythee, more." Again, in a scene to which we have alluded, Jacques says, "Farewell, good Signior Love," and Orlando retorts, "Adieu, good Monsieur Melancholy." Now Orlando is the last person in the world to ridicule a man for a natural infirmity. In Act IV. Scene i. Rosalind says, "They say you are a melancholy fellow." (JACQ.) "I am: I do love it better than laughing." (Ros.) "Those that are in extremity of either are abominable fellows, and betray themselves to every modern censure, worse than drunkards." (JACQ.) "Why, 'tis good to be sad and say nothing." (Ros.) "Why then 'tis good to be a post."

'Rosalind detects him immediately.

'We are convinced that this humour is put on to attract notice, and increase his reputation for contemplative habits. All who have been any time in his company detect his real nature and are continually aiming hits at his assumed character.

'We have been told that it is a noble and disinterested act, to leave the forest when happiness is restored to the exiles, to attend upon Duke Frederick. In the last act, Jacques says to Jacques de Bois, "Sir, by your patience, if I heard you rightly, the Duke hath put on a religious life and thrown into neglect the pomp of court." (J. DE BOIS) "He hath." (JACQ.) "To him will I: out of these convertites there is much matter to be heard and learnt." As much as to say, (the ruling passion strong to the last), "You see, good people, I never lose a chance of increasing my wisdom under any circumstances. I am extremely sorry to leave you, but friendship must be sacrificed to the acquisition of knowledge." But there is another reason for his leaving the joyous party. He will be quite out of place if he remains. The Duke and all his

friends are restored to liberty and happiness: they are all in the merriest spirits, and are about, as the Duke says, "to fall into their rustic revelry." What has Jacques to do there? He must either throw off his melancholy and become cheerful, (which will only bring him into contempt), or stay and look glumpy in a corner while the others are glad and happy. It is clear he has no business there. He can expect no sympathy. He has kept himself aloof from his companions in misfortune, and he cannot hope that they will give him a cordial welcome now. So he sneaks away and tries to do it in a dignified manner. There is a pleasant retributive justice in this, which is very satisfactory to those who hold Jacques in the same contempt as we do.

'Lastly, we should seek for the purpose of Shakespeare in delineating the character. Of the unreal and the ingenuine, the great poet had a hatred which may be traced in every one of his works. An affectation by a person of what he is not or has not, is what he is continually holding up to ridicule. It is, as we believe, the sham philosopher—one of the most pitiful and mischievous of these shams (to use Mr. Carlyle's word), which is here exposed. There is no doubt that in the time of Shakespeare, as in our own, there were many of these professors. The reputation of a philosopher, the highest and noblest fame, if true, that a man can enjoy, is often gained more easily and on slighter grounds than any other. A man, if he has only sufficient talent and discretion to remain consistent, has only to assume a melancholy despondency, like Jacques, and "rail at our mistress the world," and he is looked up to by a large body of his fellow-men as a philosopher. He says by his conduct what is equivalent to this: "I see clearly the evil of man's nature—I hate it, as evil must be hated—I cannot but despise my fellows who are so depraved: therefore I think it better to keep myself apart, and look on in pity from a distance."

'This man is not a philosopher—he is as widely different from a philosopher as possible. If a man see this, it is his duty to combat with the evil, and strive to bring down fresh light from Heaven to those who are struggling in the dark. No man can remain neutral in the battle of life. Every one has a part to play in the multitude, and woe to him if he seek to walk alone. It has been written, "They who have retired from the world, as though blaming God for sending them into it, have all, ere long, experienced the falsity of their ideal repose by the wars and fightings within." It is a platitude to say that men cannot go on

without moving; but the man who determines to perform life's journey alone, without the assistance of those influences which develope his moral being, has as much chance of attaining final perfection, as the dew-drop on the mountain of reaching the ocean without union with the stream. The drop may become impure—the man contaminated; but there is no possibility of attaining the desired end without union with others. This lesson is taught us by nature and our own hearts, confirmed by His authority, who prays for his loved ones, "not that they should be taken from the world, but that they should be kept from the evil."

'Touchstone is much more a philosopher than Jacques. Besides that beneath his satire there often underlie deep truths, he has many virtues. He is faithful, charitable, and unselfish. He leaves the quiet and comfort of home to accompany his mistress in her exile. He finds his pedestrian journey irksome and fatiguing, but his spirits never desert him though "his legs are weary." "Travellers," he says, "must be content." His last act is to marry a coarse untaught country girl, because she has honesty, "like your pearl in your foul oyster!"

'The whole purpose of this delightful play seems to be, to shew the contrast of love and nature with jealousy, hatred and artifice. We almost lose sight of the latter in the abundance of the former.

'The tyranny of the usurping Duke, and the unnatural cruelty of Oliver are forgotten in the new element that we breathe when we are released from the court—forgotten in the touching attachment of old Adam—in the affection of the two cousins, Rosalind and Celia—in the faithfulness of the fool, who will follow o'er the wide world with his mistress—in the generous spirit and modest firmness of Orlando—in the charity and true philosophy of the exiled Duke—in the rustic honesty of Corin, whose code of morals seems sound enough for most purposes though he *is* in danger of damnation for never having been to court. "Sir, I am a true labourer, I earn that I eat, get that I wear, owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness, glad of other men's good, content with my harm, and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck."

'Another cause of the great charm of *As You Like It* arises from the scene in which it is laid. It is summer time, and we are on the greensward, under the rustling trees, in almost every scene. The play opens in an orchard—then we are on the lawn before

the Duke's palace—and in the second act we are let loose in the forest among the deer. The effect is rendered more pleasing by our being now and then reluctantly brought back to "a room in the Palace," to listen to a few unpleasant remarks from Duke Frederick, but from which we only fly back with the greater delight to roam in the Forest of Arden, where the noon-day sun is loitering down through thick foliage, and flecking with light and shade the green turf beneath.

OUR PRIZE ESSAYISTS

The Life and Times of Smith, by J. Brown

By Lord M.

'The appearance of this work is much to be lamented. The author is not, as far as we know, naturally unfitted for his task. His sentiments are just and profound. His style is generally accurate and pleasing. But the subject is one which demands the most patient and laborious research. Mr. Brown is well known as a gentleman of respectable talents. But this research he has not thought fit to give.

'Smith was undoubtedly one of the greatest men of his day. There is as little doubt that Mr. Brown has made him appear one of the least. The biographer has evidently been overcome by the difficulties of his task. He has endeavoured to reconcile what a more acute man would have seen the impossibility of reconciling. There are some men, to attempt to harmonise whose character, is to take away that character altogether. Smith's character is a riddle. This riddle will in all human probability never be guessed. But it certainly will never be solved by straining that character in the method adopted by our author.

'There probably never lived a man whose physical and intellectual anomalies were more striking than the subject of this biography. It would seem indeed as if nature had formed him in one of her most capricious humours. She had gifted him with the intellect of a Newton and the superstition of a Loo-Choo Islander. He was accustomed to go down to the Royal Society and remove in ten minutes a difficulty which had baffled the researches of the most eminent chemists, since chemistry was first a science. He would leave the meeting and hasten to an old woman in Bethnal Green who professed to remove warts by incantations. In an age when the fine arts were encouraged more

than they have ever been before or since, no chambers in Europe were more profusely adorned than his, with the masterpieces of Titian, the carvings of De Burghem, and the living marbles of Leonardo Chizzello. Yet it is notorious that he preferred the inanities of M'Twaddler to the serene majesty of a Milton, and would never open Homer while he could peruse the jingling doggrel of Watts. We are ashamed to mention a fact which is as well known as the avarice of Penn, or the ravings of Fox. Yet Mr. Brown tells us that "his indulgence to the compositions of second-rate poets strikingly displays the goodness of his heart." [1]

'Nor were the peculiarities of Smith's person less remarkable than those of his mind. His form was of that perfect loveliness which drew every eye to him as he walked in the sunny lanes of Grimfield. We are told that he squinted so horribly as to drive many persons in disgust from his presence. Mr. Brown cannot believe this at all. "He had," he says, "a slight cast in his eye, which was rather attractive than otherwise." All our readers have heard of the lover, whose mistress was blessed with a similar deformity, and who could never afterwards endure an eye, of which the vision was not distorted. Mr. Brown may possibly share this feeling. But the truth is that he has polished and rounded his subject till he has polished and rounded it away to nothing.

'We wish we could say that this is the worst defect in Mr. Brown's work. But the fact is that on those points with which the biographer of Smith should be best acquainted, he is profoundly ignorant. Smith's researches into Turkish literature will live as long as the English language. Yet it will hardly be believed that Mr. Brown's ignorance is such that he repeatedly uses "Jabbajee" and "Jabbajoy" as synonymous terms. Every school-girl now reads the koran, and the first-form boy who made such a blunder would well deserve to be thrashed within an inch of his life. The biographer or historian who is unacquainted with his subject has only one course open to him. If he cannot exhibit his knowledge, he should at least be able to conceal his ignorance. It is not too much to say that Mr. Brown injures his reputation more by venturing opinions on points of which he may be supposed to be ignorant, than by displaying his deficiencies on those of which he is bound to be informed. Thus Mr. Brown draws illustrations from the history of all countries and all ages, and exhibits a want of common information, or common care, that

[1] I. 43.

would disgrace a child of thirteen. The illustrations are not good in themselves. They have the additional disadvantage of being in almost all cases untrue. It is certain that they are not needed, and we have sought in vain a reason for their introduction. No doubt Mr. Brown thinks with honest Sir Andrew Aguecheek, that if he has "no exquisite reason for it, he has reason good enough."

'We here lay aside the book with very different feelings from those with which we took it up. The life of Smith has yet to be written. The next writer who girds himself up for the labour must do so in a far different spirit. He may learn from the present volume that he has no chance of success, unless he resolve to exhibit definitely those extraordinary features by force of which Smith towers high above the worthies of the eighteenth century. By endeavouring to bring them all into harmony, Mr. Brown has left upon his pages a pleasing, but nevertheless an ideal portrait of his hero. It is as if an historical artist should set himself to shade down the brow of Michael Angelo, the nose of Gray, or the crane's neck of Mr. Pitt. The portrait may be more graceful—but what it gains in grace it will lose in truth.'

POETRY by R. W. E.

'Every poet is a new edition of the Universe. Not as one would say a microcosm, but a yet undiscovered Infinite. I can bathe in his splendour as of a new sun. He is else none of poets. He is a kaleidoscope else, not a telescope. We know the poet when we see him. Moses, Voltaire, Socrates, Confucius, were not otherwise. They are not Broadway shop-windows. I ripen in their light—sun that warms me—atmosphere that gives me life—vegetable that feeds me—indicate the genuineness of the produce. The poet lives, therefore, in as far as he exists.

'Each new world is free to all comers, but one has not of consequence the rights of citizenship. I may accept a ticket for a morning concert though I be deaf. Melesigenes is under a passport system. We may wander, like Odusseus, through many cities and yet hold no converse. George Chapman says of those who failed to naturalise Homer—

> "They failed to search his deep and treasurous heart,
> The cause was since they wanted the fit key
> Of nature in their downright strength of art,
> With poesy to open poesy."

'Again, your true poet is not a creator merely, but a destroyer. He is an elixir vitæ, but also a stomach-pump. He must clean

the palate before he recruits with the new wine—then I leap for joy—then I am godlike. From that day I am in a serener climate.

'When we read poetry we are become for the time the poet. We cannot do without it. We are become incorporate with the new type. We are henceforth a new being. We have cast the shell. We are become lobsters. I find nothing more divine in me than this. I am under a law of poetical growth. When my soul has reached its farthest horizon, the barriers crumble away and I shall enter on the perfect prospect. Tree, wall, house, city, landscape are numbered in the holier empyrean, and shall be hung with amaranth and jasper.'

CHAPTER IV

BEGINNINGS OF LIFE

It was through the *Lion* that Ainger was first brought into personal contact with the Macmillans, a literary event which had far more lasting results on his career than any of his first publications. That memorable man, Alexander Macmillan, was then the sole head of the firm and his famous shop was in Trinity Street. Alfred has himself recorded the beginnings of that friendship, which was afterwards to mean so much to him, both as a writer and an individual.

'Being of a bookish disposition, I had been from my Freshman's term a haunter of the shop in Trinity Street . . . I remember well Mr. Macmillan addressing me in friendly words on the strength (if I remember rightly) of a paper I had written in one of those university magazines, which in each successive generation of undergraduates "come like shadows," and in a year or two "so depart." He had been struck with something in the paper, and out of the conversation thus begun arose a friendship I do not hesitate to call one of the most valuable and valued of my life. . . . As early as 1855 the name of Frederick Maurice was closely associated with the young firm. Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* in its original three-volumed form appeared in that year, and by 1857 had reached a third edition; and in the same year the firm achieved what Alexander Macmillan always called his first great popular success in *Tom Brown's School-days*. . . . The acquaintance I thus formed with Alexander at this juncture speedily passed into something like intimacy, and not long after I was welcomed by the family circle at the house in Trinity Street, in the lower portion of which the business was carried on. The household consisted of Alexander Macmillan, his wife and four young children, and his brother's widow with her own four children, whom Alexander had promptly adopted on the death of their father, making of them one family with his own, until they were married or otherwise established in life elsewhere. The impression of those Cambridge days, from 1858 to 1860, is still

singularly fresh and full of charm to the present writer—the absolute unity in affection and purpose of this twofold family, and (if it may be said without offence) the total absence in the head of the household of even the consciousness that he was doing anything exceptional or out of the way. . . .

'He seemed to have an instinctive perception of what constituted excellence in a new book, irrespective of his own sympathies. I do not suppose he would ever have made an infallible critic, in the literary sense of the word. The deficiencies of his earlier training forbade it. He had not the full equipment of a critic. But intellectual insight seems to be given to some men in ways and through channels other than those of the critic whose judgment has been formed by the careful measuring of writer against writer. Alexander Macmillan's power may have been instinctive, mysterious even to himself; but the intellectual grasp he undoubtedly possessed, and the early successes of the firm, especially at the time when he was his own "reader," must have been due to his almost unerring perception of the real quality of a new writer. . . .

'I well remember taking a Sunday walk with him at Cambridge in the first few months of our friendship, and his repeating from memory the then little-known stanzas of Tennyson addressed to Bulwer Lytton that had appeared in *Punch*. . . . It might be truly said of Alexander Macmillan that, with all his literary instinct and consequent sagacity, he had that rarer thing, the deep literary heart; and no man ever more clearly understood the essential distinction between literature and books. . . . No one could share his hospitality and sojourn under his roof without discovering the large nature of the man, his generosity, his kindness and thoughtfulness for servants and dependants, his pity and helpfulness for all of them when in trouble. The recollection of his own early poverty and struggle seemed a perpetual fountain of sympathy within him. And it had the natural and happy result of evoking in return the intensest loyalty and affection from all who served him, whether in his home or in his business. Thus it was, too, that he secured an extraordinary influence over their characters, stimulating and bringing out the best that was in them. . . . Enthusiasm, a passionate belief in the writers he loved, quickness of perception and shrewdness of judgment had their corresponding side of impatience and intolerance of opposition. But his heat in argument was never but for the moment, and no one ever lived less capable of bearing a grudge.'

The large, warm-hearted being sketched here, made, as it were, a cheering hearth for talent, often obscure and unrecognised, that was then rising on the horizon—thus filling a place which it would now be hard to fill. To Ainger, as to so many others, he gave the encouragement and confidence which helped the right growth of his gifts, and in his case they were personal, as well as literary ones. The appreciation he found in the Macmillan household fostered his wit and his acting powers, and those who heard him speak in after days of that circle, of the friendship which grew up with each of its younger members, could not fail to recognise the part they played in moulding his career—as his publishers, still more as his appreciators. There was, they were wont to say later, no family event of theirs, whether birth, marriage, or death, in which he did not play a part, and in their magazine it was that his first mature efforts appeared.

Meanwhile, he was working hard at his special subject, Law, but he was not strong enough to read for honours and only took an ordinary Law degree.

"'"I am glad," he writes to William Elderton in June 1859, "to have got my first class Poll which I did not expect. I heard yesterday from a friend at Cambridge (Jack of Peterhouse) that I am second in the first class."

It was in November of this same year that his father died. The event affected his life deeply; it was not only his first great sorrow, but it swayed his whole course and his choice of a vocation. A waiting profession like the Law became impossible, and the thought of the Church which had not ceased to haunt and attract him, assumed a definite shape. The uncertainty as to what he ought to do oppressed him heavily, and his old friend, Richard Browne, who about now visited him at Cambridge, found him plunged in deep dejection, partly of grief, partly of doubt. There is some irony in the fact that at this critical moment he consulted his former tutor, Leslie Stephen, as to the advisability of taking orders and that his counsellor advised him to do so. But whatever fears Alfred entertained were fears about his own

unworthiness, not about the merits of the Church as a vocation or his earnest desire for it. It had, perhaps, never been so attractive as then. The visible proof given by Kingsley, Robertson, and Maurice of what individuals could effect for it—the need of the best men to follow in their steps and replace the inferior spirits who had entered it for inferior motives—these were reasons that weighed largely with Ainger. And it was really the influence of Maurice, and no personal advice, which finally determined him to be ordained. 'I owe everything to Maurice,' he used to say in later days, and he never regretted his decision.

There are those who assume that his taking Orders was almost an accident of circumstances, the result of conventional acquiescence in the need of a suitable career. But this is very far from the truth, for wit and man of letters though he was, he was, before all else, a clergyman of the Church of England.

He was always more of a minister than a priest. The argument of authority, the glamour of ecclesiastical tradition had little power over him. He felt something very near prejudice against any pronounced form of Ritualism, and if his position had to be defined, we should say that he belonged to the old Evangelical School—of a day when its most marked characteristic was a deep but unaggressive piety. This attitude of mind harmonised with the Broad Church views of that time, the views of F. D. Maurice; on the other hand, he was not of the Broad Church in the modern acceptance of the term, and the latitude of view that it admits would never have had his sanction. For, from beginning to end, he seems never to have entertained a doubt concerning orthodox Christianity. From all such doubts, from all speculation and criticism, from modern scientific thought, he turned away with a strong distaste that amounted to distress. Religion founded on orthodox belief—a very different thing to dogmatism—was to him the only working method of existence. His Huguenot ancestors had left him an inheritance: he was throughout life possessed by a deep conviction of sin, a conviction which, disclosed in his

private utterances, was almost as strong as Dr. Johnson's. The personal attitude towards Christ, the Christian Revelation, with its sense of reconcilement, were a necessity to him, and this necessity was, in his eyes, evidence beyond which he felt no need to travel. Individual in religion as in everything else, when once he had found what suited him he kept it, with a pure unshaken faith that endured, or rather ignored, every shock that might assail it. 'A clergyman is, at the best, a man in blinkers. He must not receive any lateral impressions,' so he wrote in his private notebook, in the autumn of this same year; and the candid, almost *naïf* phrase sums up his position, both in its strength and in its weakness. In matters of thought he was, indeed, more practical than he was imaginative, more spiritual than intellectual. Like all truly religious natures, he felt that the appeal of faith was to the heart, not to the head, and in that belief he was perhaps too willing to put aside the demands of the mind. However much the idea of taking Orders had existed at the back of his thoughts, he had not found it possible to talk of it, and the decision came as a great surprise to his family. Soon after he had announced it to them—in 1860—he wrote about his views to a cousin, Marianne Nicol, with whom he was on terms of intimacy :—

'It gave me great pleasure to find that my final choice of a profession did not altogether surprise you . . . You are right in supposing that it is no sudden freak. It is a subject that has always been lying open before me for some years and which, when I came lately to regard it as a definite possibility, assumed a more favourable look the more I reflected on it. If I cannot hope (as who could), that I have the best qualifications for the office, I certainly think that in the secular necessaries for it I am at least as well qualified as many men—for I have had some practice in reading, writing, and speaking. I think that, regarding it on this lower ground, the Church is the profession most suited to my disposition. When I come to speak of the higher qualifications I can only speak (as, my dear Marianne, we all must), with shame and diffidence. I have, and always have had, very strong views on the duties of a clergyman. I have always thought that that immense machinery which our clergy set in motion does not produce an effect proportionate to its magnitude. I

think the clergyman often alienates where he might conciliate, and I firmly believe that if every one of them was sensible and kind, there would not be many dissenters left in England soon. And the effective power of the Church of England would be thereby enhanced to an indefinite extent.

'I dare say there are many points, my dear cousin, on which you and I won't agree. I think there are some on which you would think me quite unorthodox. But I know of no points which debar me from preaching the doctrines of the Church with sincerity. "What are the little things we fight for," says Archbishop Leighton, "compared with the great things of God?" There is so much to do in the Church, about which no one could doubt, that it little matters differing on points which concern no man's relation to his Maker.

'There is no point I feel stronger on than the divinity of Christ, being convinced that with it, Christianity must live or perish.

'If the Saviour of men were not identical with their Creator, I see no help in the Cross for the suffering millions of the world. *The doctrine of doctrines* that men need to learn and take to heart is this—that the only thing that alienates them from God is sin—that each man among us has a right, by his brotherhood with Christ, to claim his position as a child of God—and that there is nothing but his own disobedience that keeps him from his true position.

'Please do not show this to any one. . . .

'I hope to see you soon in town—till then goodbye, and believe me to be, Ever your affectionate cousin,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

It was about this time that William Elderton was also thinking of Orders, and the following letters on the subject throw further light on Ainger's own feeling and follow fittingly on the last one:—

'1859.

'I was a little perplexed and surprised by what you said to me on Sunday on the subject of your taking Orders. You spoke so mysteriously at times that I thought there might be family reasons for your seeming indecision, into which I had no right to inquire. But again you spoke also in a kind of desponding or unsatisfied tone as to the state of the Church

and its ministers, which has led me to think that your reasons *are* such as concern yourself alone, and with which a stranger—not to say a friend—may intermeddle. The experience which seemed to deter you from the step in question seems to me to be just what would encourage *me* to pursue the path I had entered on. If the Church is (and it is painfully obvious) torn by dissension, lowered by the ignorance and indiscretion of too many of its ministers, and losing that respect which it has hitherto received from the world, it seems to me just the time for an earnest and thoughtful man, who values the Church as the true and only salt of society, to join its ministerial body, and labour to make his voice heard above the jargon of sects and fanatics. It seems to me that there never was a time when to preach the simple Gospel of St. Paul and St. John was much more needed than now. The low church preachers are teaching a gospel of selfishness—"pur et simple"—the high church are crushing God's message under a heap of the dreariest symbolism. We want the *Kingdom of Heaven* preached: not a gospel of rewards and punishments, but the good news of that peace and joy which the knowledge of Christ imparts—that utter change in the aspect of the world and of human life which that knowledge produces. That *love* is the greatest of the graces we may well believe, for it is surely the rarest—the hardest to cleave to, and to feel in the intercourse of life. And therefore woe unto us if we do not preach it. You know all this; and I do wish I could see you on your way to taking your part as a teacher. I do not believe you have doubts—except as to yourself and your own powers. God give us all this distrust of our own selves and our own powers, as the first step to being filled with His power, which is given wherever it is loved and sought for.

'Do write to me, and speak freely about these or any other difficulties. Ever yours affectionately,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

'*Monday.*

'Though I am hoping to see you to-morrow, still I feel I must write a few lines to tell you how good I think you were to answer a note which I felt, after I had sent it, might appear officious and uncalled-for. I fully sympathise with the difficulties which you feel in your way arising from your knowledge of your own character. I am not prepared to say that your estimate of yourself is a true one, but you know your own weak-

ness better than any one else, as we all must do. But such knowledge is, as I said before, the first step to accepting that strength which is offered freely to you and me and all men.[1]

'I confess that the aspect of religious parties is appalling; and petty as is the little pride and vain-glory of the two great parties of High Church and Low, I have come of late to think that of the modern "neologians," in many instances, quite as petty. The prate and chatter of free thought, and late schools of Biblical criticism, is to me quite as offensive as any other cant; and I confess that the contemplation of it all drives me back to the simple friendship of Christ as the most perfect rest and relief. Whatever be the mysteries of His nature—of His birth, His life, His death—still to know that He loves us, in spite of all, and is yearning to make us His, is a shrine of comfort which may give us fresh hope and confidence to go on and work at whatever our hand finds to do—certain of this, that we shall soon know all things and lose ourselves in Him as our perfectest reward.—Yours ever, A. A.'

Ainger had by now left Cambridge, and when he informed his family of his resolution, he was already settled with his sister Marianne in lodgings at Queen's Terrace, St. John's Wood. But her marriage, soon after this, to a German gentleman named Mr. Wiss, a descendant of the poet Campbell, put an end to any joint arrangement. Mrs. Ainger and her children had meanwhile moved to Birkenhead, so from this time until his ordination he had no real home in London. He was thus thrown much upon himself, and in the intervals of studying divinity he read and thought a good deal. Thought with him oftenest took the form of observation, and at this time it was his habit to jot down the results in a notebook. The little volume lies before us now—sober brown, edged with gold, full of his careful handwriting, lucid, flowing, regular—and perhaps we cannot better follow his progress than by copying from it some of the reflections that he made during 1859 and 1860:—

'Shakespeare said, "Brevity is the soul of wit." Our age reads, "levity."'

[1] Mr. Elderton did not enter the Church, but gave himself up to teaching.

'Hamlet's mental disorder consists in this, that he judges all men by his experience of a few. Brought up in the unnatural atmosphere of the Court of Denmark, and having no life beyond it except what he lives in himself, he hates his kind because he believes them to resemble the persons among whom he is doomed to live. A large intercourse with the world was the corrective he needed.'

'Any one who remembers the impression produced on his mind by King's Chapel and the other grand buildings of Cambridge when seen for the first time, and remembers how, after the lapse of a few months, they failed to produce any impression at all, and come to be looked at as the dullest matter of course, will receive a slight aid towards understanding Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*. Who will write an "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of the Freshman's Term"?'

'Charles Lamb's friend, who left off reading to the great increase of his originality, assuredly erred on the right side. The danger in this much-written-for age is of reading too much. Placed among the countless shelves of modern libraries, we are like men with many acquaintances but few friends. We are on comparatively intimate terms with the reviews. We occasionally ask a new poet to our house. We are on bowing terms with the scientific writers. We just know the historian to speak to. But, where are the books our forefathers loved because they were true and tried, when there were not so many new-comes that they felt themselves called on to leave their best friends to step across and chat with the smartly-dressed crowd of strangers opposite? Why do we not know *our* Shakespeares as good Sir Thomas Lee in *Woodstock* knew his? Oh, that we could be wrecked on a desert island, and could save "Milton" from the wreck as well as the salt-beef and biscuit! That we only knew our Spenser as well as we knew that most insipid of novels after being locked up with it for three days in wet weather in a Welsh inn, with no other consolation near but a *Bradshaw's Guide* and a cruet-stand! . . . How refreshing it is to meet sometimes with those who never read at all! What a relief it is from that clever technical conversation which is sure to spring up among readers! Often we envy those persons, unspotted from Mudie's, who would listen to the sentiments of books with the astonishment with which a savage in a state of most primeval nature would gaze upon a crinoline. They have advantages over us, proud as we feel our-

selves. Their thoughts and feelings they can trace home to their objects, and know that they are genuine, unplagued by the thought that the same things have often been thought before, and are as old as the first man who gazed upon a sunset. Their aspirations and hopes are more awful to them that they do not know how to give them expression in words.

'This is high ground, perhaps; and an ingenuous reader would pooh-pooh us. We are content, if he demur, to take a lower ground. The non-reader, if he lose much by not reading—consider well from how much he is saved. Truly the illiterate man has much to be thankful for.'

'Blackstone says that idiots cannot marry. How frequently is this law evaded!'

'According to Vattel, the Law of Nations, in its origin, is nothing but the law of Nature applied to nations. Of all the opinions of the old jurists this seems the most satisfactory. It helps, too, to expose a fallacy in Mr. Mill's essay on Liberty. The writer, in trying to prove that the Christian's scheme of morality is far from being complete, mentions *inter alia* that such a quality as patriotism, universally acknowledged to be a virtue, is not taught in the New Testament. This statement shews to what lengths a weak cause will drive its advocates. What is patriotism but the application to a man's country of those principles of love, gratitude, relationship, which are the great teachings of the gospel? If the New Testament writers had set themselves to lay down every *application* of the principles they taught, then, the "world would not hold the books that should be written."'

'"God gives every man his choice between truth and repose." Thus says Emerson, and how finely it sounds. But is it not a gross fallacy? To whom will Mr. Emerson venture to say that God has given truth? Will he dare to say that any man that ever lived attained "truth by any measure of unrest"? If Emerson kept himself loose from all moorings for his whole life, would he attain any nearer to truth than another man? . . . The insinuation involved in it is ungenerous and unjust. A man will never do anything great, if he spend his years in sifting and digging the ground on which he stands. He cannot labour without a firm foundation under his foot. It is only by taking strong hold of the soil in which it springs, that the tree will take the greatest good from the light into which it rises.'

'The distinction between the two essayists, Addison and Steele,

is something like that which Sir Andrew Aguecheek finds to exist between himself and Sir Toby Belch: "He does it well enough—and so do I too: he does it with a better grace, but I do it more natural."'

'Foster's well-known essay is on the aversion of men of taste to the Evangelical religion; and this will never cease to exist till men of the evangelical religion shew less aversion to taste. No form of creed will ever recommend itself to a myriad-minded race, which does not acknowledge that every taste, faculty, and power of human nature is capable of being exercised to the glory of God.'

'Our thoughts are greater than our words: our feelings than our thoughts. Greater than all are those phantoms of thought which sometimes, in our high moments, glide about the mind, but will not stay to be registered in words. They are glimpses of the infinite, which close before we guess whither we are looking.'

'There is an old sentimental prayer: "Teach me to forget." A wiser prayer would be "Teach me to remember—teach me to cling to the memory of those things which supported me when I was a child and helped me onwards." It is a misfortune to forget. "He that lacks time to mourn," says Henry Taylor, "lacks time to mend." So it is with those who lack time to live again, sometimes, in the past.'

The living in the past as in a natural home—so usual in age, so rare in youth—was, with him, an instinct. Perhaps no one clung more tenderly, or so tenaciously, to what had been: and to this feeling was due a great part of his natural conservatism. The words are dated August, 1860. It was in the month following that he was ordained Deacon, and became curate to the Rev. Richard Haslehurst, the Vicar of Alrewas, in Staffordshire.

CHAPTER V

ALREWAS AND SHEFFIELD

Alfred Ainger's lines had fallen in pleasant places. Mr. Haslehurst was the brother-in-law of the Rev. George Atkinson, the Principal of the Collegiate School in Sheffield, who had been Alfred's friend in Cambridge days, and Junior Tutor at Trinity Hall. Through him Ainger had first been introduced to the Vicar of Alrewas, and the instinctive sympathy that each then felt for the other ripened into something like intimacy, and ended in the offer of the curacy. Alfred went to the place he most needed—a home; a house daily graced by the love of wife and children. Mrs. Haslehurst was one of those women—Tennysonian women, we might call them—who come into life already idealised, who need no doings to justify them. Tranquil and poetic, she represented that feminine element always necessary to Alfred's nature, and even more important now than during his stay with the Kings. The sympathy, the spiritual stimulus which his sensitive temperament demanded, were provided by her, and her power to soothe and to encourage him became a factor in his existence. The shadow of her early death was still far off, and the happy days went by in work and talk and music. She was herself a musician and her husband a good violinist, so that Ainger's tenor voice with its rare quality found a warm welcome from them. So also did his friends, who were soon as much accepted in the Vicarage as himself. They were asked there, one after another, and grew, like him, to regard the house as home. Horace Smith, fresh from Germany with Schumann's songs upon his lips; the literary Fullarton; Ralph Macleod, and others of his Cambridge cronies, many of them now at work in London, shared the calm days at Alrewas; and one of them, Mr. Alsager

Hay Hill, has left a record in verse, dedicated to Ainger. It seems worth reproducing as a reminder of their intercourse :—

'And each had welcome. Who could doubt the hand
That grasped us on the threshold when we came?
(Our only title that we came with you) . . .
So kindly, too, the greeting on his face,
One almost thought, indeed, he was a friend
In some forgotten world that once was ours. . . .

Such a man
Is Nature's moulding, fashioned by the hand,
That bids the oak uplift its valiant arms. . . .
A village pastor, be it even so, . . .
Shepherd and king in one—without a crown,
But wearing all the royalty of love; . . .

She too, the gentle partner at his side,
And constant as the shadow to the tree. . . .
. . . How tenderly
She took the trivial-seeming household tasks, . . .
Among her children half a child for them.
. . . How blithely rang
The voices to our music in their glee . . .
. . . And then the vicar played his violin
As if his very heart-strings had been given
To make the tune go brisker. . . .
Or else we kept the tourney of debate,
With not a pause or resting of the lance
Till lamp flared low and moon was gliding high.
For first we laid the laws of village state;
How vestries should be guided, how the schools;
How best to stamp the spawning schisms out;
Then poets' names would glide into our talk;
And one would say "We had no poets now:
Since he the Seer of Rydal fell asleep
There had been many babblers in the land
And mocking-birds were many in the woods,
But not a solitary nightingale
To sing and make a music of its own."
Whereat there rose a clamour of dispute
To think that one should dare to speak so ill,
And e'en deny the very sweetest voice
That ever minstrel raised amid the choir
Where all are master-singers sent of God.
The hand that touched the sorrow and the sin
Of Guinevere and made them both immortal;

The tongue that framed of grief the holiest hymn
That ever heart uplifted in its loss;
It could not be his songs were born of earth,
Poor wandering echoes of some earlier voice. . . .
So lengthened ran the current of discourse
And so borne on were one and all of us—
From poets to potatoes, law to lambs,
And many another contrary, passing swift;
Thus lightly touching all things, gauging none.'

These evenings were episodes in work of which Ainger took his full share. The homes of his flock lay far apart and in after days he used to tell how he cheered his long tramps through muddy lanes by whistling the songs of Schubert. He was not a born parish-priest, nor did his gifts lie in district visiting. Among the poor as among the rich, his sympathy was with the individual, and while in one cottage his talk would flow with ease, in another he would have nothing to say. But of those to whom he felt akin, he made friends, and to them he remained not the clergyman but the dear companion and helper, conversant with the details of their lives. The charm of his presence still lives among them. 'He married *me*, and beautifully he did it,' was one old woman's comment on his death.

Yet his real work in Alrewas lay outside these ministrations. Much of his time was devoted to the services which he made more musical than was then common in country places. His chief achievements, however, were the readings which he gave every week to the parish, interspersing them periodically with more important entertainments, attended by the neighbourhood — and the neighbourhood included its postal town, Lichfield — at which he would read Shakespeare and the poets to a mixed audience of magnates and bumpkins. Who can estimate the educational influence of such an act upon a remote village; the feelings, the mirth, the experience that the reader revealed to his hearers. He opened a new world to them, even when they did not understand it. Perhaps people are helped most by what is a little beyond them, and he may not only have fed, but created, imagination in his listeners.

His intimacy with the Haslehursts deepened his older friendship with the Atkinsons, whose house at Sheffield now became a holiday home to him. George Atkinson, it will be remembered, figured as Principal of the Collegiate School in that town, and Ainger now undertook examiner's work there. This was another motive for intercourse between them, and to Mrs. Atkinson it is that he sends the following letters, written after his visits. His own portrait of himself is probably more lifelike than any photograph could have been.

'ALREWAS,
'LICHFIELD, *Monday Afternoon, March* 9, 1863.

'While I was away from home, dear friend, on my very pleasant visit to your hospitable halls, my landlady and her myrmidons amused themselves with making excavations on the site of my sitting-room. They called it "putting things to rights." In the course of their labours in the "house of the comic poet" in this modern Pompeii, they came upon the enclosed portrait, to which, if you please, you are heartily welcome.

'At the first glance you will be shocked, I trust, at the unclerical aspect of the individual represented. Like poet Churchill, it seems to have given up the white tie and parochial umbrella, for the narrow black ribbon of the comic vocalist, and the bludgeon of the literary tramp. Yet in truth is a parson often a Janus, and the lay-figure in question is my social moiety. As for the "human face divine" it is, methinks, as solemn as the *Record* even could desire. If you will find fault with it on the score that it is not intellectual enough—I observe, with Mr. Pecksniff, that the "same objection has been made before."

'You may tell Dr. Allan with my best remembrances that the staff in my hand is not meant to favour the impression that I am a "stickit" minister, and that my neck-cloth is really not as black as it's painted.

'On the whole will you deign it a place in your coach-house (where you keep your "Cartes") till a better one is executed? will you let it abide there to typify the happy ease with which its living reality would linger beneath your roof, if only his own pleasure could be consulted? Perchance, when the comic poet, like his Pompeian ancestor, is compounded with the earth to which he's kin, it may be a relic to remind you of

one who had a heart, which, while it beat, was warm with love for you and yours.

'I look back with real pleasure to my week with you. With best love to all your *inner* circle, and kindest regards to the *outer* do.—Believe me, ever yours very affectionately,

'ALFRED AINGER.

'*PS.*—I left behind me a "hood and stole" in my bedroom. Would you make a little parcel of it, and send it me by train. I am very sorry to trouble you.'

'ALREWAS,
'LICHFIELD, *Friday, June 5*, 1863.

'MY DEAR FRIEND, . . . A stay at the Collegiate is a true enjoyment; and rest assured that if anything can ever make "Memory's Waist" less, it will be such "stays" as these. I hope you are not feeling the worse for the great trouble and anxiety of the past week. You have this consolation, that you succeeded most admirably, and that everybody was as comfortable as if in their own home. To cater for forty is no slight task. . . . You must sometimes have wished that they were all (as well as your late lamented cook) the "forty thieves" and that you could house them at night in jars, borrowed from the family oil-man—and yet, methinks, the harmony that prevailed in the bedrooms was better than any "Family Jars."

'Dear friend, I hope you know me of old, and that my jesting does not mean a careless and indifferent spirit; it is a very happy thing to meet together, as we so lately met, for it seems to knit us all more closely together, and to foster goodwill and love on this dull earth. So let us be thankful and hopeful for the future—looking forward to many such happy meetings in time to come. —Believe me always, affectionately yours,

'ALFRED AINGER.

'Tell George, with my love, not to delay, any longer than he can help, sending me the subjects in which I am to examine. We shall meet again in some fortnight's time. Hurrah!

'There has at last set in a sweet and effectual rain. Long may it rain over us.

"God save the Queen."'

He loved festivals and he loved thanking his friends for them. Great, too, was his power of promoting them, a power

which alone would have made him a welcome guest wherever he went. His holidays were varied. Sometimes he spent them at Folkestone with his sister and her growing family, sometimes with friends in London. We have before us an invitation from Horace Smith, served up, 'after Heine,' an echo, still, of youth and wit and gaiety.

'TO THE REV. A. A. IN THE COUNTRY FROM HIS FRIEND IN LONDON.

'Thou little village-curate
Come quick and do not wait;
We'll sit and talk together,
So sweetly tête-à-tête.

'Oh, do not fear the railway
Because it seems so big—
Dost thou not daily trust thee
Unto thy little gig?

'This house is full of pantries
And half shut up and black;
But rooms the very snuggest
Lie hidden at the back.
Come! come! come!'

The 'little village-curate' found ample leisure for literature and reflection. His note-book stands for a kind of mental diary, and again we will keep count of his thoughts by transcribing a few from its pages.

'Surely no one ever had a keener zest for the beauties of the country than the poet Chaucer. He revels in the description of country sights and sounds. And therefore it is pleasant for a Cockney to read how the poet (himself a Cockney) writes of his birth-place. "Also the citye of London, that is to mee so dere and swete, in which I was forth growen; and more kindly love have I to that place than to any other in yerth, as every kindly creture hath full appetite to that place of his kindly engendure."'—*Testament of Love*, Book I.

. . . . . .

"Like a gentleman at ease
With moral breadth of temperament."

TENNYSON.

'What is "Moral breadth of temperament"? Perhaps this—never to suspect that you are suspected.'

. . . . . .

'"Life is our apprenticeship to immortality."

'Does not this fact require to be more universally acknowledged than at present? Life was not given us that we might be religious; but religion was given us that we might be able to live.'

'You would readily agree with me if I said that cleverness was no guarantee for truth. Yet take earnest care that you do not fall down and worship the former, in mistake for the latter.'

After the publication of *Essays and Reviews*:—

'It is because there is some truth in the book that the clergy fear it. They have not the justice to acknowledge the truth, or the theological acumen to separate the truth from the error, and think it the safest course to try and crush the teaching of the book, good and bad alike. The clergy of the Church of England are not displaying very encouraging signs of enlightenment at this crisis. Like the queen in Hamlet's play, they "protest too much methinks."'

The studied justice of this, justice acquired through reason, where his taste might not have helped him to so equable a verdict, is very characteristic of him. So is the following passage about the responsibilities of the Humorist, as he regarded them—and this conception which ruled him through life, for, from first to last, his humour was strictly controlled by his moral standard.

'It is amazing how easily vice takes a clothing of romance, valour and, above all, humour—which take from its deformity. There is nothing that is so easily made comic as sin; indeed the sinful and the comic have one essential quality in common, that they are out of the common. Both are distortions of nature. The surprise caused by the exaggerations of a drunken man is one of humour, and quite puts aside the otherwise natural feeling of aversion. . . . Thus it is that the responsibilities of a humorous writer are so grave. He is doing very serious mischief when he represents, as he so easily may, vice and vulgarity as the objects of our laughter. There is little or no truth in comic novelists' representations of low life. They cannot portray the private lives

and conversation of cabmen and coal-heavers as they really are. The portrayal of them would be simply offensive. . . . Thackeray, in a paper on public executions, points out that Dickens, who knows life well and knows the characteristics of a thief's mistress, is quite aware that his picture of Nancy in *Oliver Twist* is not a faithful one. He *dared* not draw a true picture of her. . . .'

He disliked effectiveness and he seemed purposely to avoid the brilliance of epigram. His sayings are so simply and conscientiously put that we are often tempted to think them obvious, until we look more closely and find that the clearness of the water has misled us as to its depth. Often, too, the note of his utterances is one almost of individual prejudice, as, for instance, when he writes of Emerson :—

'How can any one rise from reading Emerson's *Conduct of Life* without feeling, if he has a human heart left within him, that if that is the whole Gospel of humanity, it were our blessedest fate to die and be at peace.'

The fact is that Ainger was too personal for contact with Emerson, and was, as it were, offended by the rarefied atmosphere of philosophical thought. He desired austerity, but the austerity of controlled emotion, not the austerity of abstract wisdom.

In 1863 he was ordained Priest, and his life at Alrewas came to an end. He accepted an appointment as assistant teacher in the Collegiate School at Sheffield, under his friend, and it was with the Atkinsons that for the next two years he took up his abode. Few details concerning them remain, but they were happy years of cheerful toil and pleasant recreation—of widening interests and new friendships that soon became old ones. 'Sheffield, a place and people I dearly love,' he wrote long afterwards, and his ties to it never slackened.

Of his professional work there is scant record. Much the same might be said of it, as of his parochial visitings. He was made for *a* boy, not for *the* boy, and though he fulfilled his task with strict conscience and was liked throughout the

school, it is easy to believe that his sensitive and fantastic being would not have produced much mark on that race of crude young Philistines called schoolboys. Yet wherever refinement existed, wherever a taste for literature or some half-formed spiritual aspiration lay ready to be called forth, the impression was made and remembered. So were the readings and impersonations with which he delighted the school. For games he never had sufficient physical strength, but throughout his life they fascinated him, and he loved them in every form with a keenness which stood him in good stead during his mastership at Sheffield. His profession was a slow one as he wrote to Mr. Atkinson—in verse:—

> 'Slight is our calling in men's eyes,
> And slight the fame that greets success.
> To work and wait seems all our prize,
> How great that prize none else can guess.
> By wise dynamic law we're led—
> That loss in time is gain in power.
> Our name an hour can never spread
> Because we do not serve the hour.'

Perhaps no one was less cut out than he for routine work; and no one would more have objected to being told so, for routine was part of his conception of true discipline.

His daily round at Sheffield was cheered by a great deal of music. Most of his new friends were musical, chief among them the William Smiths, a large family with whom he formed a close intimacy, lasting to the end. He loved a large family with all its natural cares and cheerful doings, and he had a peculiar gift of forming part of one. In this case, every boy and girl was as much his companion as their parents. His figure would appear at the schoolroom window, breaking in upon the tedium of lessons with droll antics and irresistible imitations of monkeys and birds, with wonder-stories and nonsense rhymes struck spark-like from the moment, or with the conjuring tricks in which he always took pride. With their mother his ties were perhaps the closest; her sense of humour suited his, and it was to her that for thirty years, with unfailing punctuality, he wrote an

annual Christmas letter. 'Whenever I hear a good story,' he once said, 'I chuckle and say to myself, that will do for Mrs. Smith on Christmas Day.' And his letters are like an echo of the festive times he had spent with the Smiths, for their house, Brocco Bank, was the centre of music and hospitality. An oratorio in the manner of Handel, called 'The Oyster Feast' and 'dedicated to that eminent maestro, Herr Wilhelm Schmit,' still exists, as far as the libretto goes:—

'Away with books and learned looks,
Avaunt, thou studious cloister,
We 're off forthwith to William Smith
To taste the juicy oyster.'

Thus it led off to the tune of 'Shells of Ocean,' followed by Mrs. Atkinson's solo:—

'What viands e'er, that earth may bear,
Can in our hearts such joy stir?
Ah, there's no meat in life so sweet
As is the dainty oyster.'

And then came the 'Septett (with vinegar and pepper obligato),' and the 'Duett between the Learned Pundit and the Ignoble Punster' (Alfred Ainger himself), and a final request that 'each performer be provided with a full score.' Alfred was jester, composer, and conductor—the Mercury of the company. He was an inveterate rhymer, and there are copy-books full of verse-epitaphs, prospectively improvised in Latin and English for the tombs of his friends—parodies—album-lyrics. Serious poems there are too, composed, perhaps, on his long walks over the Yorkshire moors and relegated by him to obscurity. Many of them he himself would hardly like to see in print, for he did not take them very seriously, but for the most part threw them off without bestowing much time upon them. Yet their simple feeling speaks to us, and one of them, 'The Prayer of a Busy Man' will find a response in many hard-working spirits:—

'Oh Lord, with toil our days are filled!
They rarely leave us free,
Oh give us space to seek for grace
In happy thoughts of Thee.

Yet hear us, though we seldom ask;
Oh leave us not alone!
In every thought, and word, and task
Be near us, though unknown.

Still lead us, wand'ring in the dark,
Still send thy Heavenly food,
And mark, as none on earth can mark,
Our struggle to be good!'

There are other lyrics of this time inspired by sorrow. For in January 1865, there came the news of Mrs. Haslehurst's death, after a long illness, while with her husband abroad. The grief it brought to Ainger—the sense of acute personal loss, unexpected and unnatural—was ineradicable. There is a letter of his describing her funeral, restrained, almost formal, but behind the quiet lucid words we can feel the rising tide of emotion which he dared not let forth. Death consecrated for him a friendship already holy, and made unfading the romance with which he surrounded her.

'And when on yon green mound I gaze
Where lies the joy of bygone days,
Tears give the breaking heart relief,
But a new joy up-springs from grief.'

So he wrote at Alrewas on Easter Day, 1865. Sorrows seldom come singly. The same year that she died took from him another person near to him, his brother-in-law, Dr. Roscow. This blow which he felt both for his sister and himself, greatly changed his outlook, for henceforth he looked upon himself as the guardian of her and her children, and the responsibilities, which never left him, began to crowd thick upon him.

We can find only one letter belonging to this period, but its grave tone suits well with the turn his thoughts had taken. Mrs. Atkinson had asked him to be godfather to her little son.

'Collegiate School.

'My dear Friend,—You are about to give me a very sacred interest in your little child, and I thank you for this new proof of your regard.

'The office of godfather has indeed come to be little more, in

practice, than a name, but nevertheless I would not have accepted such a trust at your hands, did I not know that we are agreed as to what we would most wish and pray for the young Christian. I could not consent to take upon myself this charge, if I did not know that what I promise to-day will be the chief care of you and yours in years when we may be widely separated.

'Our most natural thought as we look upon the little unconscious face to-day will be of the innocence of the child, and the unknown future that is before him. We may look forward to a time when he too shall feel the "little joy" of knowing that he is "farther off from Heaven than when he was a boy." But we may take best comfort, I think, from the reflection that the "innocence" of childhood is but another name for its ignorance, and that to press on to the happiness of the redeemed is of more avail, and is more blessed than to regain (if it were possible) the blamelessness of the child.

'Whatever *we* may teach, may God teach him this, that he will only fulfil his true manhood when he strives after the likeness in which he was created.

'May you and I and all men be striving after this likeness: "Not backward be our glances bent, But onward to our Father's Home."—Ever, dear friend, affectionately yours,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

The year 1865 saw a new phase open for him. A brilliant gleam of success fell across his uphill road, and guided his steps in the direction which was to be that of his life-work. He had heard that the Readership at the Temple in London was vacant, and his friend, Horace Smith, wrote to urge his competing for it. But it was chance that threw the casting die. He used to describe how, walking along the Sheffield streets one day, he met an acquaintance who stopped and spoke about the Readership. 'Why don't you go in for it yourself?' he said: 'you had better run up to London and try,' and the random remark, so Ainger declared, made up his mind for him and decided his fate.

It was in November 1865, that he went to town to appear before the Benchers of the Inner Temple, carrying with him testimonials from Fawcett, and Latham, and Ward, as well as his clerical credentials. He was one of the three candidates picked out from the many, and once having listened to his

voice, the assembly elected him unanimously. His rare beauty of tone, low and vibrating—his manner of reading, vivid without being dramatic, impressive without the slightest striving for effect—were indeed unique, drawing many to the Temple for nearly forty years to come. With the Temple his name was henceforth to be identified. From the first he grew familiar with its pulpit, for the Readership entailed preaching in the afternoon, as well as at other times if the Master were absent and required it.

At the time of Ainger's appointment, Dr. Robinson was Master, nor was it till 1869 that he was succeeded by Dr. Vaughan, who was to become Ainger's intimate friend. With every one about the Temple he soon became familiar; with the organist, Dr. Hopkins, with the vergers, and, outside the church, with the Benchers, whose lawyers' talk always had a peculiar fascination for him. Nor was there a guest more welcome than he at the Benchers' table.

Early in 1866, as soon as his affairs were settled, he left Sheffield and came to live in London altogether. To part with the Atkinsons was a grief, and he penned no more graceful tribute than his acknowledgment of what their home had meant to him. Nor can we close the chapter of his Sheffield career more fitly than by transcribing it.

'Exiled from his father's house,
As the sacred records tell,
In the quest of home and love,
Jacob came to Haran's well.

And he wooed his Rachel there,
Seven years without demur,
And they seemed to him but few,
For the love he bore to her.

Homeless, and with kindred few,
Driven Jacob-like to roam,
I, for seven happy years,
Found with thee and thine a home

Trusted friends of seven years,
May I not my guerdon claim?
Christian are the hopes we share,
Call me by my Christian name.'

'Since I learned of my success,' he wrote to the same kind friends, 'I have often wished that our dear ones who are gone were here to share my happiness; but I know that they do share it. . . .

'I feel rather lonely, as one must do on the threshold of a new and untried life, but I believe God will be with me to help me as He has been all my life, and I trust I may be allowed to do some good work in my new position. . . .'

CHAPTER VI

AT THE TEMPLE

1866-1873

Alfred Ainger was now in his thirtieth year. At this period of life, standing as he did on the threshold of a new experience, it may be well to pause and look at him as he then was. Pale of face, pale of hair, with eyes of a piercing blue, varying in intensity according to his mood, now cool and light, now very dark and glowing, his under-lip protruding, as if to shoot forth some whimsy, his fine, nervous hands often used in an expressive gesture, his form, frail yet elastic, slightly stooping as it moved forward with a distinctive striding step—it is thus that he rises before us, a figure suggestive of the stage in its good old days, of one of the actors whom Lamb remembered, full of character and of erratic grace. His appearance was indicative of his character. The first word suggested by both was personality—that force which can only be felt, not defined. When he came into a room, the room knew it and was changed. 'When he left us,' said a friend, 'we always felt as if we had been at a wedding; we did not know what to do for the rest of the day.' It was part of his charm that he contrived to unite so many paradoxes. Mercurial and formal, fantastic and imbued with sharp common sense, he was a strange mixture of Ariel and of an eighteenth-century divine. Charitable he was more than most men, and almost as prejudiced as he was charitable; full of deep Christian humility, yet with such an eye for folly that his tongue often dealt in mordant satire. A lover of the obvious, but so fastidious that he sometimes seemed capricious or unjust; dependent on good company, and also a creature of moods, of formidable silences which none could break, till some chance word that took his fancy changed the weather, and the sun burst forth again.

'I will, however, admit that the said Elia is the worst company in the world in bad company, if it be granted me that in good company he is nearly the best that can be. He is one of those of whom it may be said: *Tell me your company and I'll tell you your manners.* He is the creature of sympathy, and makes good whatever opinion you seem to entertain of him.' These words, written by Hazlitt about Lamb, serve as the best epitome of Alfred Ainger's social qualities.

When he came to London for good, he first lived with his old Cambridge friend, Mr. Fullarton, and his mother, who had a house in Westbourne Square. But a great deal of his spare time was given to his sister, Mrs. Roscow, at Sandgate, where she now had her home, and the close relations between them, broken into by her marriage and by his removal to a distance, were resumed once more, the closer for her solitude and sorrow. In her love for him there always remained something of a mother's feeling, and a letter in rhyme that she wrote to him about his recent success gives voice to all her solicitude.

'Dearest, my joy flows with thy joy and gain;
God knows thy soul's bright wings I would not stain
With shade from thoughts less happy than thine own,
But that true love can only take her tone
From what lies nearest, dearest, to the heart.
Thou on fair heights of expectation art,
New worlds of power unfolded to thy view,
All blessings falling on thy head like dew. . . .
Who then in this thy brightest hour could fear
The treacherous cloud that may be passing near?
Only the heart that loves thee best can see
The dangers lurking in prosperity. . . .
Ambition reaching upwards to a crown
Which being found has power to drag thee down. . . .
Forgive these old, old thoughts; I would not chill
Thy youth's sweet, sunny spring-time. May it still
Brighten all hopes; for thee I cannot fear
That thou wilt ever learn to hold less dear
Truth's holy cause. . . .
With this firm trust am I then, brother mine,
Thy loving, happy sister—Adeline.'

Her brother wrote verses to her, too, and the sonnet

that follows was probably composed in a mood of lonely depression :—

'Home is not home where is no kindred face ;
And often, wearied with the jars of day,
From strangers' hearths I sadly turn away
The story of my childhood's days to trace.
The past seems fading from me ; and the grace
That clings to home and household memories ;
For friends are sweet, but friendship ne'er supplies
The love of those who link us to our race.
But as in cottage panes the setting sun
Writes in gold words the story of its reign,
So in thine eyes, my dearest, still remain
The gentle memories of a day that's done ;
And when I think of thee, I smile, my own,
To think I ever thought I was alone.'

Adeline Roscow was in many ways a contrast to her brother. As spiritual as he, she had gone through phases of religious doubt and suffering. Her character was intenser ; her mind, though not so gifted, was bolder ; and she thought every risk worth facing in the pursuit of truth, confident that faith and aspiration were stronger than any formula. 'I start from the Real and you from the Ideal, yet we meet on common ground at last,' her husband had once said to her. Emerson and Huxley were the writers whom she most admired ; though she was an idealist she was also a keen appreciator of science, nor did she in any way regard it as hostile to belief. When she spoke of the education that she desired for her boys, it was one of her chief points that science should hold a prominent place in their upbringing. 'It is happiness,' she wrote in connection with this subject, 'to think how the light of Truth is clearing away some of the difficulties, the mysteries, which have perplexed our generation,' and a poem of hers, belonging to this time, sums up her conviction and marks her individual thought :—

'There is a higher truth than truth of creed ;
This will not serve us in our utmost need,
Even though truth unmixèd should be ours ;
'Tis truth of life, of purpose, and of deed . . .
That makes our spirits heavenward-climbing flowers. . . .

Then do not weep for him or deem him blind
Whose heart and soul and life to God are given;
With time dies every error of the mind,
Only the soul can cast a stain on Heaven.'

Many of the long conversations between the brother and the sister were about the education of the four children, two boys and two girls, who ranged from ten years old downwards, and she often surprised him by dwelling upon the details of her wishes, prompted, as afterwards appeared, by the premonition of her death.

Perhaps in these days that she so wished to make happy for him she hardly showed him the strain that it was to her to keep cheerful, though her instinctive interest in things made her easily absorbed in the topics that his new life brought into play.

He had made his mark at the Temple. Every Sunday afternoon he read and preached to a crowded and cultivated audience, such as he had never had before, often taking for his theme the subjects of the day which he thought his sermons might affect. Popular education was one of them—the subject of a discourse as typical in manner as in thought.

'And think, too, in conclusion, what light this passage (Mark x. 15) incidentally throws upon the functions of the educator. If we are to learn as Christians, even as children learn from a wise teacher, let us remember also what duty that imposes upon those who have to educate a people. The cry of the day is for education—unsectarian—compulsory, if need be; that no child in our teeming streets may grow up ignorant of its powers and of that which those powers were given it to procure. We hope the day is coming when this may be accomplished, only let us be sure that we know what education is; that it is to lead child and adult alike under a divine discipline, not only to furnish them with powers that can do the Devil's work as readily as they can do God's. For it is possible to put into their hands a light which can disclose new paths to Hell, as well as to Heaven, and we may lead them to retort upon us in the end, as Caliban retorted upon Prospero:—

"You taught me language, and my profit on 't
Is—I know how to curse!"

ADELINE ROSCOW.
(ALFRED AINGER'S SISTER.)
From a photograph.

'We may forgo the right to train up broods of controversialists on this side or on that, but we can only abnegate at our peril the duty of teaching every child in our schools that there is a Kingdom of Heaven, on accepting which depends its true prosperity and peace.'

He writes, enclosing this fragment to his friend:—

'My dear Smith,—Reading your admirable speech at the Sheffield congress, I could not but recall the above words which I spoke a few weeks ago in the Temple Church. I am sure that you will agree with them, even as I am sure that I agree with your utterances on the same topic. I believe that the time is coming when, possibly through greater social revolutions than we now dream of, and through much tribulation, we shall be forced to preach a broader and deeper kingdom of God than the formularies of sects take any account of. . . .

'In the meantime our duty is clear; we *must* preach the Revelation of God in Christ; but we may do that, as I believe, with you, through many channels, other than catechisms and Bible classes.—Yours ever affectionately, A. Ainger.'

It was happy for the world that these channels included in his eyes the high-roads and by-roads of literature, that the poetry and the wit of the interpreter became inextricably one with the kind of priestly responsibility that he felt towards art and letters. His readings no less than his preaching, his unexpected talk and his epigrams, were bringing him social reputation. We catch brief glimpses of him among new friends, though the only written record we have of a Shakespeare reading at this time is one at a house already familiar, that of Mrs. Menzies, formerly Miss Louisa King.

'Dearest Louisa,—I ought to apologise for running away in such haste the other evening; but I was "colded" and tired; and, moreover, the reaction of my spirits after reading tragedy is so peculiar, that I am wholly dazed and unfit for society. For the time being the fictitious life is immeasurably more real to me than the *living* life around me.

'Will you direct the enclosed and post it to your friend

Dr. Richardson, who has kindly (?) sent me a copy of his drama. I fear it won't do.

"'Mediocribus' is not allowed, you know,
By gods, or men, or Paternoster Row."

'Love to all, yours ever affectionately, A. AINGER.'

'(Enclosed):—

'To Dr. R—— who sends me his dramas.

"Oh! doctor, finding ever fresh
Employment for thy cruel mood,
Thy ether-spray to freeze our flesh,
Thy tragedies to freeze our blood.

Thank God I stand in need of neither;
And yet, were I my mind to say,—
If I must be the *prey* of *either*,
Then let it be the *ether's prey*."'

Upon work and play, upon the joys of a growing name and a growing popularity, there descended the cloud of sudden grief. Early in 1867, Alfred had gone to stay at Sandgate, unconscious that a tragedy was hanging over him. For his sake, his sister, for the first time since her husband's death, had made the effort of dining out. She returned home exhausted and distressed by a pain in her head from which she often suffered. When his eldest niece, Margaret, a little girl of nine, came to greet him in the morning, he sent her to see how her mother was. The child came back running, to fetch him, with a white, scared face. He hastened to follow her into his sister's room, but when he reached her bedside he knew what had happened. She had been dead for some hours. The pain had increased, and having summoned some one to attend to her, she had been left in apparent comfort. A clot had caused the catastrophe, and death had come without a struggle—the fulfilment of the presentiments which had for a year been haunting her. To her brother she had been sister, mother, and friend, and the shock was one from which he never really recovered. His youth died with her; the loss of her destroyed the stability of existence for him, and within

a few days his hair showed broad streaks of white and he altered more, perhaps, then than ever he altered afterwards.

There is a poem which he copied out as a portrait of her, a few days after her death, in a letter to Miss Young: Wordsworth's 'Stanzas on Mrs. Fermor,' the sister-in-law of Sir George Beaumont—some of which seemed like an epitaph inspired by her whom Ainger mourned.

'Pale was her hue; yet mortal cheek
Ne'er kindled with a livelier streak
When aught had suffered wrong—
When aught that breathes had felt a wound;
Such look the Oppressor might confound,
However proud and strong.

But hushed be every thought that springs
From out the bitterness of things;
Her quiet is secure;
No thorns can pierce her tender feet,
Whose life was like the violet sweet,
As climbing jasmine pure . . .

Thou takest not away, O Death!
Thou strikest—absence perisheth,
Indifference is no more;
The future brightens on our sight;
For on the past hath fallen a light
That tempts us to adore.'

The day of his sister's death, he had to go back to fulfil his duties at the Temple. Thence he journeyed backwards and forwards between Sandgate and London. Her loss changed his outlook in more ways than one. She had made him guardian of her family. The Roscows had never been rich, so that after Dr. Roscow died, his wife had had something of a struggle; and though enough remained to bring up her four children, they were dependent on their uncle for all the needful little garnishings of life—its pleasures as well as its refinements; wholly dependent upon him, also, for the greater possessions of care and love. He was still a young man, with all a young man's hopes and wishes, with a great need of liberty and a very limited income. His nature, which liked many ties but was not inclined for one—or for anything that implied stationariness whether of body or spirit—was the last

that others would think fit to carry such a burden. Yet he made a home for these boys and girls, the eldest of whom was only ten, and never from the day of his sister's death until that of his own, was he untrue to his charge.

When we consider (though in doing so we foretell events) that, in years not so far ahead, he almost entirely undertook the maintenance of the four children of his sister, Marianne, whose husband had been unfortunate in his profession, we shall in some fashion measure the restrictions imposed upon his life; shall understand why in after days he toiled on at classes in girls' schools, at lecturing, and the writing of stray articles, when many would have liked him to devote himself to some more permanent work in the cause of literature.

The sacrifice was one not unworthy of his well-loved Charles Lamb. Meanwhile he found helpers in the task of looking after his wards. He had a rare gift for children, and the child that lived on in him drew them instinctively to him. But he was conscious that he did not know much about little girls, and he made counsellors of two good women—one an old family friend, a playmate of his childhood, Miss Mary Thompson, whose house was now near his in London, the other, also an old friend, one whom Adeline Roscow had deeply loved—Miss Emma Young, who lived at Reigate—the cousin of Alfred Domett, better known as Robert Browning's 'Waring.' Between these two ladies the maternal care of the girls, Margaret and Ada, was divided, and a great deal of motherly tenderness accompanied their ministrations, the boys, too, finding a home with them whenever they happened to require it. As the girls were sent to a boarding-school at Reigate, it was Miss Young who superintended their early education, while Miss Thompson looked after the holidays that were not spent with their uncle. It was he, however, who planned their days; and his letters and visits to his confidantes took up no small part of his time. The elder boy was already at school—the Collegiate School at Sheffield—and the younger was sent for a while to stay with his father's relations. Harassed by all his responsibilities, Alfred found that his best armour lay in his work and in his books:—

'"Thank God for books," said Sydney Smith, "and who that has known what it is to depend on them for companionship, but will say from his heart, Amen?" In lone country houses, where friends are few; in crowded city streets, amid greetings where no kindness is, thank God for books! Dearest, best of friends—soothing, comforting, teaching, carrying us far away from the "briars of this working-day world"; never importunate, never impatient, may we learn to use you as you use us.'

These words were written by Ainger not long after this period, and these friends on the shelves did not fail him at an hour when human comradeship was powerless. But with him the arid mood of sorrow did not last; his need of human affection was too strong.

'How pleasant it is to love people!' he writes in a letter of 1868. 'I often get a strong flush of comfort out of these great words, "Hereby we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."'

And again (after a visit to the Atkinsons):—

'"Then do fewest words suffice
When many words are felt to be too few,"

' says Henry Taylor, and whenever I take leave of you and yours I feel how true they are . . .

'I hope you all get on well and do not miss me *too* much. Shake up Warren and Gibson in a bag, and bring out the perfect character. Tell the Captain to make no more jokes lest a worse thing befall him. And for yourself—touch you, and we may spoil you—so remain as you were. And one and all write to me.'

Perhaps it was especially now, that the remembrance of his own little family made him tenderer than ever towards childhood. It would seem so from some letters, written in the midst of crowded London days, to a little twelve-year-old girl, lying ill at Sheffield.

She still remembers the event they were to her, the feats that he performed to amuse her when he came, the sudden transformation of her dull sofa into a world of fun.

'18 Westbourne Square, *Wednesday, Nov.* 10.

'My dear Helen,—I am sure you know how sorry I am to hear of your being unwell, and obliged to keep quiet in the

house; and I have been thinking that you might like to have a letter from me sometimes. For I know from my own experience when I have been ill, how pleasant it is to get letters, and to be put in remembrance of one's friends. Your mamma has kindly promised to let me know from time to time how you are, and to hear that you are better will be quite sufficient return for my letters; if indeed I needed any return for what is in itself a great pleasure to me. I was talking about you only yesterday, for I was calling on your aunt, Mrs. Hawksley, in Phillimore Gardens. I shall see them again to-morrow, for I found that they were going to hear an opera which I am very fond of, called *Fidelio*, by Beethoven, and I asked them to let me take a seat near theirs; so I am to dine with them and then go with them to the opera. When you are a *little* older, your mamma will take you, I know, to hear it. You know some of Beethoven's music; and everything he wrote is great and pure and beautiful.

'And now, it is very easy to promise to write to a young lady; but the great question is what to write about. For living as we do in different places and among different people, how am I to interest you by telling you London gossip and matters that only concern myself. I have been thinking a great deal about this; and I have resolved to make my letters more interesting by telling you a story sometimes, from some old poet or other writer whom you are not likely to have read for yourself. I am not one of those clever people, like the French cooks, who can make a pretty and exquisite dish out of nothing; so that I dare not try to write a letter when I have no matter of my own to start with. However, I dare say, I shall be able to do something; and whether I send you a story, or some verses, or some other kind of dish, you must give me credit for doing the best I can.

'So this letter, to-day, you see, is a kind of preface; just telling what the book is going to be about, and apologising for the author's want of ability. And you see I am very cunning; for I am sending the preface by itself: if it had been sent with some of the book itself, you would have skipped the preface, as people always do when they read a printed volume; and now you will be obliged to read *this* preface!

'Besides I am tied for time to-day as I have to go to Hampstead this afternoon; so I will merely add that I hope you are feeling pretty well, and that whatever pain and weariness you may feel, you will feel, too, how good and loving God is to you, as He is to all His children. For He gives you relations and

friends who love you; and I often think that such love is the greatest blessing we have, next to the love of God.—Ever, dear Helen, your affectionate friend, ALFRED AINGER.'

'18 WESTBOURNE SQUARE,
'*Thursday, November* 25.

'MY DEAR HELEN,—I am afraid my letter will not be a very long one this week; and if I have not time to tell you any stories myself, I am sending you a book full of stories, which you must not think less worth reading because they happen to be true. A Mr. Freeman has written for young people a history of England in its early days before the Norman Conquest; and Mr. Freeman knows more about this particular time in English history than any other living man. . . . A taste for books is one of the most blessed tastes that God has given us, especially when health is weak and we are obliged to stay in the house, and let our bodies rest. And a taste for books, if at least they are healthy and wise books, is a taste for knowledge; and knowledge is the path to wisdom, which is itself the love of what is good and the power to choose it and value it as the most precious of our possessions. And history, if it be only true, is to my thinking the most interesting of studies: and no novel or story-book gives me so much pleasure as the finding out what actually has happened to those who have gone before us in the world.'

'18 WESTBOURNE SQUARE, W.,
'*Thursday, March* 2.

'It is really like Spring to-day; and the country, I have no doubt, is just ordering its Spring-clothes. The birds will be building in your garden I should think. Don't disturb them till I come. Look about for the cuckoos. You know what unprincipled birds they are. They watch for the lady and gentleman sparrow to leave the nest; then they go and lay two eggs there—ring the bell, and run away. And so they are enabled to get their family brought up at other people's expense. It is sadly egg-otistical!

'By the way, this is Ash Wednesday. I hope you like your salt-fish. It is very nice when one is egg-sauce-ted. Pray excuse this quite unintentional play upon words. I have a great contempt for any one who makes puns.

'I am so much obliged to your Mamma for being so good to Tom. It is so nice for him to have a pleasant house to go to; for

he sees nothing but boys at the Collegiate, and that is very insufficient diet for the intellect and affections. If he talks very broad Yorkshire, you must correct him ; though in a general way I am only too thankful if he talks at all, for he is a silent young gentleman. I wish I had been at that party—but there ! it 's no use to repine. I would have dressed up as a Sheffield clergyman, and *no one* would have recognised me !

I am in a sadly satirical mood to-day, and I think I had better stop before I say anything too bad. Do you ever see Mr. Schollhammer? If you do, tell him I have heard Stockhausen sing, and it has been an epoch in my life. I have got some new Schubert songs to try over when I come, so have the piano tuned.—Ever yours, (in a corner), A. A.'

The promised story of *Fidelio* arrived duly, told with the detail and the sobriety of one of Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. He was fond of attempting to imbue children with his own love of music. His standards were severe, even with the smallest performer. His niece recalls a visit he paid her at school, and how she proudly sat down to play her carefully prepared Thalberg variations on 'Home sweet Home.' When she had done, and was waiting expectant, 'The cooking was better than the meat,' was all he said, and after his departure, the governess asked her what he had meant.

It was in these years that he first learned to know Sir George Grove, who was henceforth to be a conspicuous person in his existence, not only as friend and host, but as the promoter of the Crystal Palace Concerts and the Editor of *Macmillan's Magazine*.

'It was,' he says, 'towards the close of 1868 that I first came to know George Grove. I was passionately fond of music, although then very ignorant of the orchestral and chamber works of the great composers. To such a state of musical destitution, the Saturday concerts at the Crystal Palace were a revelation indeed. . . .'

'Grove was at that time nearly fifty years of age, and if past the prime of his various powers, certainly at the very height of his enthusiasm. What struck me about him was his seeming boundless capacity for work, in comparison with a like capacity for interest in all the tastes and pursuits of all his friends, notably

of young men, musicians, or other artists, especially if they were poor, or perhaps unhappy in their family surroundings. Grove seemed to have time and strength for everything. He haunted concerts in London, as well as at Sydenham. He wrote articles and prefaces. . . . He apparently read everything new in the artistic or literary world, yet always kept himself in freshest touch with his old favourites, Coleridge, Lamb, Tennyson. . . . Added to all of which he was a humorist and a raconteur such as one seldom met. No wonder that he attracted men of all sorts, and exercised a kind of fascination over the young and aspiring. For with everything that he thought and said and wrote, was blended that charm of enthusiasm which kindles love as well as admiration. . . . The figure in which Grove most often recurs to me is of one sitting close to the pianoforte with his elbow on his knee and his finger along his cheek, listening with rapt admiration to *Anna Lyle*, or *Leiermann*, or *Dass sie hier gewesen*.'

Franz Schubert, the writer of these songs, was a great bond between them—'Schubert, with whose works,' as Ainger wrote, 'Grove's name will be for ever associated, who owes an incalculable debt to Grove for the spread of his music in England.' No one who heard him recount it can forget the excitement with which he used to repeat the story, heard from Sir George Grove's lips, of how Schubert's unfinished Symphony had been discovered by Grove himself, put away on a dusty shelf, in the Library at Vienna. History meant little to Ainger and the discovery of a new world would have had less power to move him than this incident. It became a drama when he described the searching in the cupboard, and the first unrolling of the score.

The thought of Schubert pursued him, and when he went abroad, as he did about now, it was to 'Schubert's country,' the Salzkammergut, and the only news he sends thence, is that the places he was seeing inspired the *Ave Maria*. 'My hostess is a charming pianist,' he writes later from a house in England, 'and the sound of the Beethoven and Schubert is always in the land.'

From the Crystal Palace concerts Alfred used often to go home with Sir George Grove, whose house near the Crystal Palace became his constant haunt, the 'wooden-faced cottage

in Lower Sydenham, which we used to call the G.G. Block, after one division of the seats at the Handel Festival.' 'Often,' he continues, (in his own reminiscences of Grove[1]), 'have I stayed with him and Mrs. Grove, from the Friday till the Sunday morning, and written my Sunday sermon on the Saturday morning in his little (rather damp and underground) study, in a chaos of books, music, prints, and photographs.'

Through 'G.' Alfred also learned to know his new friend's neighbours, the von Glehns, who made their roomy house, Peak Hill, at Sydenham, the centre of a delightful society. Mr. von Glehn, the father, was a Russian from the Baltic provinces; his wife was a Scotswoman, and both of them were gifted people of warm sympathies.

Music seemed to be a family inheritance; so were all generous traditions, whether of art or hospitality, and the atmosphere of their home seemed made for Ainger, who speedily took root there. Once more he found himself part of a large family of sons and daughters, prominent figures in the social life of the day, and quick to welcome talent while it was still obscure. Emanuel Deutsch, Hans von Bülow, Stockhausen, Sullivan, were their guests; and here, before they were known, came Hubert Parry, J. R. Green, and Mandell Creighton, who soon after became engaged to the youngest daughter of the house. Of the other two, Olga and Mimi, both full of gifts and charm, Alfred was the constant companion. At all times of his life he was dependent upon feminine influence—we use the word in its old astrological sense. His sensibilities demanded a soothing and benignant power, a listening ear and a helping hand; and perhaps no man since Richardson has been a greater adept in the art of friendship with womankind. As time went on, Mimi von Glehn, the refined musician, the harmonious, hospitable-hearted woman, became one of his closest friends; they made music, she playing to him, he singing. The air was full of fun. He evoked it together with the atmosphere in which it could live. Like all real humorists, he made other people feel creative. In the acting, in the fooling to purpose, to which he treated his audience,

[1] *Life of Sir George Grove*, by C. L. Graves, p. 464.

he paid them a subtle compliment; conveyed to them with delicate courtesy that they were essential to his inspiration. He was not only at home at the von Glehns', he also grew intimate with their circle. He liked to dwell on those days: on the gay nights he spent at Sydenham, on his impromptu rushes thence to St. James's Hall in company with Grove and J. R. Green; on the winter reading of Shakespeare, which made his friends sure of his weekly visit. It is to the mother of the family that he writes of these:—

'Kind friend, beneath whose genial roof
The wintry hours have sped so fast,
This lonely evening adds its proof
That joys may be too bright to last.

For fifteen weeks a friendly train
Around the social board have met
To smile at Slender's childish vein,
Or weep with love-lorn Juliet.

No winter gale has power to touch
The sweetness of Verona's spring;
Our private griefs seemed small to such
As that which wrecked Sicilia's king.

And as we read our Shakespeare's page
Each wound of time found healing balm—
The blood of youth ran new in age—
The young were touched with age's calm.

But ah! to-night the wind is chill
And all the cares of life return;
O memory, linger with us still,
And Hope, bring forth thy lamp and burn.'

Meanwhile his busy professional life went on. He had by now moved from the Fullartons', and that lonely evening when he felt the wind was chill, he spent in the lodgings which often witnessed his depressions. Good company beguiled him, but directly he was alone the sense of homelessness came back to him. He went to chambers, first in Tanfield Court, the Temple, and then in Spring Street, Paddington, where he took up his abode over a china-shop, in little rooms brimming over with books. In this limited space he contrived to harbour his nephews and nieces when they sometimes paid

him visits in their holidays, and they well remember his minute arrangements—the bliss of their Crusoe discomfort—the long expeditions with him to all the sights of London, his figure walking quickly before them threading crowded streets and crossings.

They had other and more bewildering memories: of him crouching upon the hearthrug, of his impenetrable silences as he sat there in a fit of suffering, bodily more than mental, for his health which was always delicate had felt the recent strain upon it. The children meant much to him in these years that were both full and solitary—when the presence of grief was still with him, but calmed and mellowed by time. There is but one poem on his sorrow, and that was written by his sister's grave four years after he had lost her.

'The hills are white with snow,
And the sun is bright o'erhead,
As I stand with heart bowed low
In homage to the dead.

And a pain my spirit chills,
But a hope is burning high,
For the snow will leave the hills
And the sun is in the sky.'

CHAPTER VII

LONDON AND ITS FRIENDSHIPS

1873-1876

Alfred Ainger's luck in friendship followed him to the Temple. In 1869, Dean Vaughan became Master, and a strong sympathy quickly grew up between him and his Reader. Ainger admired his chief both as a man and as a preacher. His feeling was returned, and the two saw a good deal of each other. Every Sunday was spent with the Vaughans at the Master's House, which became a home to him twenty-five years before he himself went to live there. By that time it already held for him many memories of bygone intercourse, and so did the Vaughans' house at Llandaff where he often spent summer holidays. For the Dean loved good talk and good literature, and any one who promoted them. A third friend still keeps the impression of the two men standing absorbed in conversation, their lighted bed-candles in their hands, on the drawing-room landing at the Temple. Some grease fell on the carpet from the Dean's slanting candle. 'How neat he spreads his wax,' was Ainger's immediate comment—to the great pleasure of Dean Vaughan, who was not above remembering Dr. Watts and 'the little busy bee.'

Nor did any one more fully than he appreciate Ainger's services to the Temple; his gifts both as Reader and as preacher. Of his reading of the service and of the lessons those who have heard it need no reminder, and it is impossible to convey an idea of it to those who have not. The low, clear, vibrating tones, swift to change and to thrill, yet kept within due limits, seemed, as he read, to be one with his presence—fraught with spiritual dignity. And his voice lent eloquence to his sermons apart from the beautiful English,

sober and significant, in which he clothed them; apart, too, from the exquisite sense of quotation which became their special distinction. Every Sunday afternoon and on other occasions also, when Dr. Vaughan required it, he preached to a large congregation and never left it unimpressed. Delicacy rather than force of thought, practical rather than intellectual truth, were the characteristics of these sermons, as they were of those belonging to later times. The personality of Christ—the relation to Him of the individual soul—these were, then as ever, his central themes, and his attitude to modern criticism was one, not exactly of hostility, but of shrinking distaste. He himself has summed up his deepest feelings on these points in three verses that he wrote about now, 'On reading a Volume of Modern Sermons.'

'With eager knife that oft has sliced
At Gentile gloss or Jewish fable,
Before the crowd you lay the Christ
Upon the Lecture Table.

From bondage to the old beliefs
You say our rescue must begin—
But *I*—want refuge from my griefs,
And saving from my sin.

The strong, the easy, and the glad
Hang, blandly listening, on thy word—
But I am sick and I am sad,
And I need *Thee*, O Lord.'

'Sick and sad' he often was.

'Believe it, dear child, that there is no happiness to compare with loving and trusting God,' he wrote, rather later, to a little girl upon her confirmation. 'It is *very, very* hard to achieve; and the very effort to do it will only throw into greater prominence the evil and sin and weakness in you that tries to shut God out. But, oh—it is best to *feel* and *know* our sin and our weakness, because we may be certain it is He who is showing it to us. . . . I have known you all your life, my child, and you will not mind my writing thus to you. And do not be hard upon me because I myself so sorely need my own good advice. With all the sin and evil that I know against myself, I have never known any real happiness that did not come to me through remembering the things I am now urging upon you. God bless you.'

In his letters he constantly reiterates his need and his belief. During these last years he had seen much sorrow among his friends, had more than once watched the death of young people—the kind of grief which is most apt to create doubt and despondency in those who witness it. But in him it produced, as it were, an elation of faith, and two letters that he wrote about now to those who were in trouble so much express the same kind of thought that it seems of interest to place them side by side.

To Mrs. Bowles on the death of her brother.

'Dear Friend,—What can I say, but God bless you, under this heavy sorrow? By a blessed law of His Kingdom, we love those most for whom we do most; and you and Robert have been everything to him whom you have lost, and made all the difference to his young life; and you feel towards him as to a son.

'I was so hopeful for him when I left his bedside for the last time a week ago, and so looked forward to seeing him again, and helping to relieve the monotony of the sick-room, but God has willed it otherwise, and we know that He is Love.

'What a mystery it is that a life should be taken just when it has been *receiving*, and was about to begin bearing fruit. What a waste it would seem, did we not believe that no preparation is wasted and that there is work to be done, if not in this world then in the next.

'It was impossible to be with the boy and not love him. I felt that he would win me very soon to a strong affection were I with him.'

To Miss Flora Stevenson, whose niece had died.

'There is surely nothing so mysterious, nothing so pathetic, nothing so stimulating to one's own faith and love, as the death of the young. I have quite lately watched, day by day, a young life fade away, and have felt awe-struck at times, as one who had been admitted into the presence of deity. "Why this waste?" we ask. And we know in our calmer moments that nothing is wasted—and that the life, a fragment only, has yet been lived to blessed purpose, if only in the lessons it has taught. . . . I was indeed glad to see you again the other day. It is one of the curses of an imperfect state that friends are continually separated. We shall amend that, with other things, some day.'

There are not many long letters of this period. His pen was busy with other tasks. Between 1870 and 1895, he became a constant contributor to *Macmillan's Magazine*; for though his first article, *The Uses of Books*, appeared as early as 1859, it was not till now when Grove was editor that he wrote regularly in its pages. Most of his articles had been lectures, such as he began to give at schools and various public places, and nearly all of them were on purely literary subjects. Some were biographical, some critical. His own conceptions of a critic's function he has summed up himself in that first paper of 1859.

'Of those who do think—and the practice has rather gone out of late—there are a few who think for themselves, and a great many who think for the benefit of others. These last are sometimes called, for convenience, critics. All works must first pass through their furnace before they are fit for the general reader, who pays his fivepence cheerfully for the *Weekly Rasper*, and gets a vast variety of opinions for his money. In a spare ten minutes he has the opportunity of reading what another has written in ten days concerning a work which has occupied a third party perhaps as much as ten years. How admirably is labour shortened nowadays! As we pay an architect to build, so we pay a critic to think for us; and so considerate it is of the critics always to extract the faults of a book, and leave the general reader to find the beauties. Sometimes there is a notice in the shop-windows —"A few improvers wanted." It must certainly come from an author who is wanting critics. . . . Ah me! who would be a critic by choice, if he had but the chance of being only a common reader. . . . Amid so much deprivation, it is consoling to think that the critic usually contrives to retain his spirits. It has even been noticed that, by some beautiful provision, the more faults he has to find, the merrier he is. Like Ophelia—

> "Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself,
> He turns to favour and to prettiness."

Thus is there compensation in everything.

'My friend W., with whom I was the other day looking over a review of a friend's book which the reviewer was mangling with the highest enjoyment, said he was in hopes now that we were

returning to the good old Aristophanic school of criticism. He said he would see all reviews abolished and have farces substituted instead; and how excellent it would be to see Carlyle held up between heaven and earth in a clothes-basket, and Bulwer Lytton and Sheridan Knowles weighed against each other in scales. W. went on to say that criticism was not nearly so successful as witticism, and that if Shakespeare had lived in our time he would have seen that levity, not brevity, was the soul of wit. He is a sad wag, W., and always will have his joke.

'Almost all criticism is too minute and too partial. Hence it fails to exhibit any but a most imperfect view of its subject. It takes a full-blown rose, and after examination presents to the reader a heap of petals without form or perfume. The critic has used his eye-glass, and sometimes to the injury of his eyes. For this reason it were well if we never read the review of a book till we had read the book itself. Then let us compare our impressions, if it may be, with the large and reverent judgment of a fuller knowledge than our own. . . . To understand a great writer, as to understand Nature, we must yield our prepossessions. When we read we lose much by not standing side by side with the writer. That in which persons differ essentially, is not in the amount of knowledge they possess, but in the point of view from which they look at things. With different centres we have different circumferences. When the centres of reader and writer are very far apart, they live in separate worlds. To understand some writers we must change our planet and wait patiently till we are acclimatised. . . . There is a class of readers—and a large one too—who like to find in books rather what they know already than what they have yet to learn.'

This was certainly never Alfred Ainger's foible, though he may sometimes have gone near 'liking to find in books rather what he loved already than what he had no mind to love,' and thus limited his vision. But he generally avoided this danger by reading only what he cared for, and was therefore capable of judging, a fact which limited his range, but gave a fine flavour to his verdicts. None was a better connoisseur of the bad reader than he was.

'There are those,' he wrote, 'who read to kill time, as a refuge —oh, shame! shame!—from themselves. There are those who read because some work is in fashion, and it were bad taste not to

be able to talk of it. There are those who read in order to give the public the benefit of their judgment—those mysterious men, the critics. There are those who read indiscriminately with morbid wideness of taste, as the savage devours earth. Lastly, there are those who read little, but with discernment; whose books are their honoured friends—"the souls who have made their souls wiser." . . .

'But there still remains a question whether the craving for books may not be a disease, and whether we may not live too little in ourselves, and too much in others. The professor, whose young friend boasted that he read ten hours a day, inquired with amazement, "Indeed, then when do you think?" The old man was right. The master who sees a pupil with idle hands, and fears that, being without a book he is losing his time, might not unreasonably hope that his other pupil, who is never without a book, is not losing his thoughts. "It is hard," Orlando says, "to see happiness through another man's eyes." It is also unprofitable always to see things reflected in another man's mind. . . .'

His conviction that the reader and the critic are necessary to one another, that only together they can produce the atmosphere in which literature can grow, was one that he tried to embody in his own attitude towards books. He had ample opportunity now for testing his views. He was meeting writers and scholars of all sorts at many well-known houses, but more especially at Knapdale, Tooting, the home of Alexander Macmillan. In its large, leisurely rooms, or in its spacious, old-world garden, there gathered together informally the men and women of note and the young promise of the day—authors, poets, painters, English and French, whether they came from Oxford or fresh from the ranks of the Impressionist artists. Of one such gathering, in May 1874, Malcolm Macmillan, a son of the house, jotted down a record for the benefit of his absent sister.

'The great A. A.,' it runs, 'was in his most prolific vein. I could hear Mr. Hughes ringing with laughter as they took the lawn together. . . . After tea Sara Carmichael played some less-known nocturnes of Chopin's, one solemn one in particular. Mr. Ainger was in raptures. It was a most pleasant piano revel. (A piano revel includes all the gracious suavity of artistic enthusiasm

as well as the playing.) . . . "I suppose you can't 'taste Wagner in sips,' as Dick Swiveller observed to the Marchioness about beer," said Mr. Ainger.

'"Hutton won't leave vivisection alone. It's 'cut and come again.' At least the vivisectors go on cutting and he goes on coming again," he said later on. . . .

'Ainger's taste and humour are stamped with the constant working of exquisite selection and the interpretative assistance of a voice and manner suffused with rich enjoyment and a sort of melodious rumination.'

At the Macmillans', for nearly twenty years to come, Ainger was a loved and loving guest, one of the leaders of their society, yet perhaps most welcome when alone with them. In the summer he often stayed with them for several weeks on end, reading plays, generally Shakespeare's, into the small hours of the morning. And sometimes when his happy hearers discovered it was late and prepared to go to bed, Ainger, excited by Shakespeare—and himself—would hold them by moonshine antics, breaking forth, Puck-like, into a shadowy dance, swift, graceful, unreal, which seemed part of the witching hour. After such rare exhibitions of this accomplishment—his, it will be remembered, from babyhood—he would show an added dignity of bearing which forbade any reference to them, and woe betided those who asked him to repeat them. Yet he kept his fantastic power of twisting his limbs into any shape, although, as time went on, he ceased to exhibit his skill.

His friendship for Alexander Macmillan was extended to his family: to his little girls, Maggie and Olive, as well as to his sons, Malcolm and George, then in their early manhood. The brilliant literary promise of the elder, Malcolm, made a special bond between him and Ainger, and it was with these two that, in the early seventies, he made his first trip to Italy.

> 'My two dear young ladies, I tell you no story
> When I say that, tho' absent, you're near to us still;
> For Maggie is seen in the Lake Maggiore,
> And Olive is smiling from ev'ry green hill.'

So he wrote to the sisters at Knapdale. But he was no

traveller, and has left no letters about the journey; the only thing we know of his stay in Florence is that he was bent upon finding the house of Walter Savage Landor. He showed himself here, as elsewhere, the determined votary of association, for he had not the spirit of adventure which lures so many abroad, and the upheaval of journeys did not suit him. The visits that he sometimes paid to Switzerland and Germany were either for health, or to see his sister Marianne, who settled first at Heidelberg, then at Stuttgart—but of these also there remains no written memorial. There was, however, one expedition to which he always looked back as among the great pleasures of his life. This was a trip, in 1873, to Bonn, to join Sir George Grove at the Schumann Festival. In after days he loved to recall every incident of this summer time: 'G.'s' welcome—the glories of the music—the sight of Brahms in a garden by the Rhine—his own wanderings by the river loved of Beethoven and Schumann—his visit to Schumann's grave and the verses that he made there.

'When the soul with sorrow laden
Hears no answer to its moan
In the jocund voice of Haydn
Or Mozart's pellucid tone.

When our Schubert's magic lyre
Fails to lead us at its will,
And the deeps of our desire
E'en Beethoven cannot still.

When the mists that bound things human
We have sought to pierce in vain—
Then we turn to thee, oh Schumann,
Bid thee sing to us our pain.

For there's rapture in thy sadness
And such joy in thy despond—
And thy drifting clouds of madness
Cannot hide the blue beyond.

Thy revolt can teach endurance:
And the spirit sore oppressed
In thy fears can find assurance,
In thy restlessness its rest.

From thy bitter draw we sweetness,
And a peace from out thy strife,
And a vision of completeness
Broods above thy maimèd life.

Then no funeral thoughts be ours,
Take these funeral wreaths away—
Leave the grass to God's own flowers
And the glory of the day.

For, O pilgrim friends who wander
To this lonely artist shrine—
It is Sunday[1]—and see yonder
Flows the blue unchanging Rhine.'

One great delight, yet untouched on, Alfred Ainger had in London: he was an impassioned playgoer, to such plays as suited his taste. In these earlier days his fancy found food in plenty, for he often went to judge, even when he did not greatly enjoy. Charles Kean, Robson, Compton, Alfred Wigan, Henry Irving, Arthur Cecil, and the wholesome plays in which they acted, were, each in their turn, not so much a relaxation as an elemental part of his London life. He identified himself with the actors as only a born actor can.

'He was' (says his old friend, R. C. Browne) 'a delightful companion at the theatre. His society gave a keener, more subtle relish to those pleasures—his attitude was that of quiet expectancy, not anticipating but receiving what might come, thoroughly ready to enjoy it, but steadily referring all that claimed acceptance or admiration to that calm, inexorable judgment of his. He had an alert perception of the absurd. He detected it under however imposing or brilliant a disguise. On the first night of the *Winter's Tale,* when Charles Kean dazzled the town with the contrasting splendour of Magna Græcia and Bithynia—into which Shakespeare's Bohemia was for the nonce transformed—he refused to allow the pomp and pageantry to conceal from him the thin and ragged poverty of the dramatic presentment. When "Time as Chorus" suggested the enquiry:

'"If ever you have spent time worse ere now," he remarked *sotto voce,* "Hardly ever, I think."

[1] 'Madame Joachim's singing of Schumann's "Sonntags am Rhein" was one of the most touching incidents of the Festival,' was Ainger's own note appended to these lines.

'Neither could the best acting reconcile him to a badly constructed or improbable play. In such a case he would be restless and uncomfortable—not to say cross—even if his favourite Robson were on the stage.'

Ainger's dramatic sympathy was creative—the most creative quality he had; it became, as we have said, a kind of self-identification, and reproduced itself under many forms. His imitations of Kean, Robson, Wigan, were inimitable—no parodies, but the men to the life. And as some musicians can evoke a whole orchestra on a piano, so could he recreate a whole comedy in its various scenes and characters. There was no need to go to the play for those who could hear him read 'Still Waters,' or 'The Wandering Minstrel,' or 'To Parents and Guardians,' in which the part of the shabby, high-souled French master gave scope to his powers of pathos. It was about now that he first learned to know Lady Martin, the Helen Faucit of the stage. To her Rosalind, her Beatrice, her Juliet, he soon became Touchstone and Benedick, Romeo and the Nurse; for there were, during several years, frequent readings between them at her house, heard only by a little group of friends.

Lady Martin was one of the few actresses about whom he was enthusiastic; later, Miss Rehan was another, and he went almost every night to the plays of the Daly Company—his Daly service, as he called them. 'No, I cannot possibly go to-night,' he once firmly responded to a friend who had pressed him to come with him to see *As You Like It* for the third or fourth time. But a few hours afterwards, when the same friend entered the theatre, the first person he beheld was Ainger. 'When I got home I found a seat waiting for me, and I had not the heart to refuse it,' he said. This was, however, in after times and an exception. His usual theatrical experiences then were not so happy as in old days; the problem-play bored or disgusted him; smartness of speech stung his taste. To performances of Shakespeare he always went, because no one, he said, should lose an opportunity of hearing Shakespeare's language spoken, however bad the actors might be. But modern stage realism, like all effectiveness,

jarred upon him, and he often came away oppressed. From its earliest manifestations, refined when compared to what followed, he lifted up his wit against it, and he protested in rhyme against 'The first appearance of the real hansom cab at Drury Lane Theatre' (in *The Streets of London*).

'Ho for Art and Education—
Ho! for Progress (à la Crab)—
Have you heard the new Sensation?
Have you seen the Hansom Cab?

Never, Drury, was thy stage meant
For this "most unkindest" stab—
They have offered an engagement
To a Cabman—and his Cab.

Where we've wept with Juliet's sadness—
Heard Mercutio or Queen Mab—
Where we've marked Ophelia's madness—
There to-day's a Hansom Cab.

Here we've seen the Hags appalling
Make the gruel "thick and slab"—
Here we've heard King Richard calling,
For a horse—but not a cab.

Gone—Sir Toby, Slender, Shallow,
Launce with "stony-hearted" Crab,
Shakespeare's touch e'en curs could hallow;
Not e'en his—a Hansom Cab.

Touchstone, Trinculo, all vanished—
Hushed the jester's fluent gab—
"For oh, the hobby-horse" is vanished—
Modern taste demands—the Cab.

Close the idle Panorama,
All is gone—and on a slab
Let us write "Here lies the Drama.
Knocked down by a Hansom Cab."'

He also protested in prose.

'So long,' he writes, 'as we care to see tinsel and fine clothes, we shall see our noblest writers presented to us in garbled extracts, as vehicles for scenery and costume. The evil was beginning to show itself in Rome when she was on the eve of her decline. It is impossible for Englishmen not to think with

delight of those rude times when the strolling players acted Hamlet in the country barn. It must have been with much the same feelings that the educated Roman of the Augustan age thought of the time when the Athenians thronged beneath the blue sky to listen to the words of Sophocles and Aeschylus. Let us only be thankful that the great poets are ours to-day and for ever, and that no stage, however degraded, can take them from us.'

His conception of the function of the drama was serious, though not overstrained.

'The place,' he said, 'that the minor theatre occupies in the education of the people, seems to be that it rescues them from pleasures that are merely sensual. Such a place is perhaps not a high one; but it is a fact, which is too often forgotten, that until there is awakened in the people a love for something besides mere sensuality, the teacher will seek to approach them in vain. The world of fiction is not a barren one. Having reached it now, the man will more readily listen to invitations from other worlds, new and unsuspected.'

The deterioration of the stage Ainger largely ascribed to the false position of the actor. And here his conclusions were unexpected. Far from laying down, as one might suppose, that the actor should live for his art, away from the temptations of society, he believed that the best dramatic artist was also the best man of the world.

'In the actor's profession,' he wrote, 'what needs toning down is the personal element. Of too many of them in all time it must be admitted—we are sure that the best among them will be the readiest to admit the truth—that their besetting temptation is that expressed in the Laureate's lines—

> "It's always ringing in your ears,
> 'They call this man as good as *me*.'"

'Hitherto there has been some excuse, or at least explanation, of this in the gulf which has separated the actor from ordinary society. His personal supremacy became his compensation for other things that were denied him, and his defence against the educated world's contempt for his profession. But as the dignity of that profession rises, and with it the social position of the

actor, the desire for personal supremacy ought to yield to, or at least be tempered by, other gains. Pride in the profession and a sense of its worthiness . . . ought to take the place in some degree of less ennobling aims. But among other reforms, there is one which in any case ought to be early introduced. An actor should not have to play every night; or, if a continuous "run" of a certain piece is necessary, it should be followed by a period of comparative repose, or at least of alternations of leisure evenings. It is only so that the actor can fill his place in some measure in ordinary society, and obtain the benefit of taking friendly and wholesome part in the common interests of the world, among which, after all, are fostered the best and most healthy development of human character, and therefore the conditions which go to make art also wholesome and fructifying.'

This was a characteristic judgment; Ainger was always an advocate of the obvious and the average. He was also an advocate of the amateur element as essential to the professional actor. This was, if we may use so solemn a word, his message to the stage, and nowhere has he better expressed it than in his early criticism of Dickens as a comedian.

It serves as an epitome of so much he felt and believed, so much he himself practised in his art of interpretation, that it seems worth quoting at some length.

'To say that his acting was amateurish, is not necessarily to disparage it. No one who heard the public readings from his own books which Mr. Dickens subsequently gave with so much success, needs to be told what rare natural qualifications for the task he possessed. Fine features and a striking presence, with a voice of great flexibility, were added to a perfect mastery over the sense of his author, because that author was himself. But it is certain that many a low comedian would have made the character of Sam Weller, for instance, more telling than it proved in the hands of its originator. Many persons will remember what a hush of expectation used to take possession of the entire audience, when in the trial-scene from *Pickwick*, the crier of the court said, "Call Samuel Weller," and that immortal worthy stepped into the box; and what a palpable feeling of disappointment succeeded his first words as spoken by Mr. Dickens. . . . Certain it is that nearly every one of the audience thought that the reader had in this respect unaccountably failed: and, as we

have said, many a low comedian without a tithe of Mr. Dickens's genius or knowledge of human nature would have better satisfied the general expectation. But we are persuaded, and were persuaded at the time, that Mr. Dickens exhibited a fidelity to truth in this instance more really artistic than in his imitations of certain familiar types of character such as Serjeant Buzfuz or Mrs. Cluppins. He presented Samuel Weller as having, in spite of all his wit and readiness, the characteristics of the class of society to which he belonged. People had forgotten that Sam Weller was a boots and a waiter, and that, although a master of chaff and slang, he was not a professional clown; and they expected to hear from the artist and the literary man what they would have heard in a dramatised version from the low-comedy actor. In this respect Mr. Dickens, as an actor, was amateurish; but it is only another way of saying that he was not of the stage, stagey. If there was a certain ease and *handiness* which the practice of the art as a profession might have brought to him, he at least escaped the tyranny of those conventionalisms which the best actors (at least those of our own time) have not been able to resist.'

To the end, the dramatic element in fiction was a subject which fascinated Ainger, and the stage possibilities of great novelists was a theme that he liked to consider. At present, however, his criticism on art was mainly expressed in verse and contributed to *Punch*, the pages of which were sometimes now enlivened by his sallies.

CHAPTER VIII

AT HAMPSTEAD

1876-1880

A NEW chapter of existence was now to begin for Ainger. The years had passed, his nieces had grown up; it was time that they should leave school and have a settled home. He resolved that the home should be with him, and made what was for him the momentous resolution of taking a house of his own.

At the beginning of 1876, he moved to his old haunt Hampstead, to look about him; there he found what he wanted in No. 2 Upper Terrace—a furnished house lying high, with a view of the still unspoilt heath. It was the first time in his life that he had had a house of his own, and he felt a child's joy in every part of it. He liked to show off its Morris papers and Chippendale furniture, and he took delight in the thought that he was making a home for his 'girls.' Their rooms were filled with 'surprises,' always a favourite invention of his. 'Well, do you notice anything?' was his question in later days when they returned home after an absence; and the anything was perhaps a new curtain, or a carpet, the laying down of which he had superintended himself, for he had his own ideas about 'selvage' and hangings, and the trimming of lamps, an art in which he solemnly initiated them in the first days after their arrival. His particularity about household details and his proud sense of proprietorship were prominent qualities in him. No one was fonder of committing little extravagances in the name of his house. They generally took the form of a water-colour or a drawing, and when he feared his womankind would scold him, he would wait till some friend was present and carelessly bring forth his bargain; or he placed his purchase, as if by chance,

in a favourable light in the drawing-room, and invariably betrayed himself by the joy with which he eyed his acquisition.

But this is to anticipate. He and his two nieces quickly settled into their new abode which they just filled—at close quarters—a fact which is worth recording as a measure of his domestic patience. It was indeed a change from the freedom of his bachelor solitude to find himself sharing a small house and a small sitting-room with two shy young girls, of whose ways he knew very little. His new acquaintance and next-door neighbours, Miss James and Miss Coates, came before long to his rescue, and, together with the more distant 'Aunt Mary,' who still lived in Bayswater, greatly helped him with his charges. He was always anxious about their observance of the proprieties, though entirely ignorant when he himself broke them. One day as rigid as Mrs. Chapone upon some knotty point about an escort, on the next he would ask a young man to stay and, finding he had to be absent in town, would contentedly leave him behind as sole chaperon of the party. 'I 'm afraid I must go into London, now,' he used to say, soon after two o'clock, to any guest he had chanced to ask to luncheon, 'but I shall quite hope to find you on my return'; and to his nieces' dismay, his 'hope' was generally realised, though he did not come back till six. He liked inviting many friends now that he had a home, and if he were in vein when they came, he would take up some book of poetry and read to them by the hour. If he were not, he would hardly open his lips. A cloud would sometimes descend and, for several days together, he seemed unable to speak to those who were with him. Some of his depression was doubtless caused by over-work and new responsibilities, and by the change in his mode of existence; but most of it was purely physical. At this period, especially, he went through much bodily suffering, which generally took the form of a severe headache, during which he kept a strict fast, often for two days running. The fatigue of going to and from London, the increase in number of the classes that he held and the lectures that he gave in order to make a sufficient income, his con-

stant social doings—all put a strain upon his slender strength. After his heavy work on Sundays, which detained him in London till late evening, he was frequently laid up, and next day he was found, his head on one side, looking at himself in the glass. 'I think I am rather Mondayish this morning,' he would say, a speech too often the prelude to hours of bed. But those who had seen him in the midst of such an illness, speechless with prostration, were surprised to behold him a few hours later emerging gaily from his sick-room, to sing Schubert all the evening, or to break forth into fantastic escapades.

It is almost impossible that words should convey Alfred Ainger's exuberance of fun at this time without making him seem grotesque—and that he never was. There was no end to the forms his drollery would take. He would dance a 'fandango' with a certain lady in Hampstead, a fantastic dance which they executed with fans in their hands; or he would practise his skill as a ventriloquist and drive down Bond Street imitating the loud cry of a cockatoo, so that all the passengers looked up and about in search of the escaped bird, while he sat demure and apparently silent upon the back seat of the carriage. And then there was his Christmas Harlequinade which he would not stop for any one, so that a chance visitor once entering and seeing him trip up on the hearth-rug, ran forward to help in the accident, unconscious that he was only witnessing the classic drama of Joey, the Clown, to be followed by that of Columbine.

Those who saw him thus could perhaps hardly realise the nature of his daily life. It was, indeed, of the soberest. His wards at this time occupied a good deal of his leisure; he took pleasure in guiding their taste by reading to them, for reading aloud was always his chief method of teaching; and he enjoyed nothing more than escorting the younger girl to the teachers of music and singing whom he chose for her. He also educated them—sometimes rather severely—in the arts of intercourse. He could not bear indolence or apathy. 'Never be ashamed of not knowing, but be dreadfully ashamed of not wanting to know,' he used to say to them.

To words and modes of speech he was almost extravagantly sensitive. Many of his sudden, seemingly capricious silences were caused by some expression that had jarred upon his nerves—that had, so to speak, stabbed his taste. If some one said 'photo' for photograph, or talked of 'being seedy,' it was enough to make him shun their society; and his nieces averred that if *they* had used these terms, he would not have spoken to them for a day. To real faults he was generally indulgent, but any want of consideration, especially to servants and dependants, met with no mercy at his hands, whether in big things or in trifles. An indistinctly written address had a special power of irritating him; it was, he said, an act of selfishness to the overworked clerks in the Post Office, and he would make his nieces re-write illegible directions, or copy them out himself rather than despatch them as they were. His courtesies were occasionally rather inconvenient, and his nieces did not always relish toiling up Hampstead Hill at midnight in their evening dresses, 'to save the cab-horse,' an effort which he never failed to make himself, however tired he might be. Nor was he less chivalrous to the cabmen. He chose as his habitual chariot the dirtiest and most broken-down fly, hardly safe to drive in, and the most dilapidated coachman, overpaying him largely, and refusing to be taken by any driver who was not down in the world. The fact was that he grew fond of all those to whom he was accustomed. Strangers did not always receive the same forbearance and the sight of an unknown face was something of an offence. His usual newspaper man once brought the paper to his house at an unusual hour, but Ainger, who saw him advance without recognising him, imperiously waved him back down the path, refusing all negotiations; and later, at the Temple, there was a more fatal occasion, when a barrister coming to the Master's house to ask the Master to officiate at his marriage, was similarly sighted from afar, taken for a beggar and summarily ordered to retreat. None would have been more shocked than Ainger at this breach of hospitality, but his dislike of people taking liberties was almost as great as his generosity.

The shabby fly was in constant requisition at Hampstead, for there was seldom an evening on which he did not dine out. Though he rejoiced in the new atmosphere of home, he was not yet as domesticated as he believed, and his friends claimed him as they were wont. But when it came to bigger projects, summer holidays and country invitations, he often had to refuse them.

'We are at present without plans of any kind; you see I now have encumbrances and I can't get about as independently as of old, when I enjoyed what somebody called "the desolate freedom of the wild ass."'

Thus he wrote to a friend who had begged him to come and stay. All the same, his nieces used to try and count up how many beds he slept in during the year, and they were never able to complete the computation.

Voluntary work took up a good part of the leisure left him. It was seldom that he figured as a civic character, and it is therefore worth recording that he devoted a good deal of time and labour to the public library at Hampstead. It included several rooms and was intended for the use of all classes, but especially for the use of working-men, for whom it made a sort of club. The kind of help that he gave there was characteristic. His colleague in this matter, Sir Henry Holland (now Lord Knutsford, and then member for Hampstead) recalls a difficult moment when it was found that the working-men themselves hardly came to these club-rooms at all. It was Ainger who discovered that some of them did not possess 'best coats,' and so did not like 'the world' to see them in shabby dress going in at the public entrance; and his sympathetic invention of a back-door finally solved the difficulty and filled the empty rooms. But the most important work he did for Hampstead lay in the impetus he gave to its concerts and the way that he raised their position till they ranked among the best in London. Soon after settling in Hampstead, he became prominent on the Concert Committee, advising the choice of music and of artists. And he made it his task to translate the German songs they gave

into English, leaving in this way some of his best-wrought lyrics; for his lines, though keeping close to the original, were poems by their own right.

These concerts brought him into contact with a good many fresh people. So did the literature classes which he now held at Hampstead, setting papers for his pupils the response to which linked him to many among them. The humble and the timid wanting guidance, the intellectual wanting sympathy, found in him an unfailing helper, sparing neither trouble nor patience, ready with books as with counsel. He rapidly became a solid literary influence, moulding the taste of his neighbours and setting the literary standard wherever he read or lectured.

In private houses he read, too, more especially in that of his old friends the Misses Johnston, who lived on in the home that he remembered in his young days. Hampstead was still a world apart—almost like a University town, with its own characters and its own men of note, among whom he soon counted. There were old acquaintances, there were new ones; Miss James, his supporter on the Concert Committee; Mrs. Julian Marshall, another musical colleague; Mrs. Charles, the author of the *Schönberg-Cotta Family*; the Champneys, the Holidays, the Spencer-Wells, with many of whom he grew intimate. Chief among all these ties was his friendship with George du Maurier, which played so important a part in his life that it demands a chapter to itself.

Less prominent, but meaning much to him, was another friendship that he formed with Miss Margaret Gillies, a portrait-painter of past repute, then nearly eighty years old. She had belonged to the Lake School circle, had taken Wordsworth's portrait in her youth, and stayed much at Rydal Mount. She fell in love with her new neighbour as only charming old ladies can, liking to receive daily visits from him; to hear his fancy play round her memories; to send him delicate little notes; or to give choice dinners at which he was the honoured guest. She bestowed on him her greatest treasure, a water-colour picture of Leigh Hunt, which hung on his drawing-room walls—one of his favourite possessions;

and when she died in 1887, he missed her sorely as one of the few persons who revived a bygone world.

Perhaps one of his little letters to her best finds its place here, although it was written a few years later.

'Dalness Lodge,
'Taynuilt, Scotland.

'. . . Have you read Carlyle's *Life*, I mean the later volumes by Froude? It is most interesting and deeply pathetic. I have also read the new book *Natural Religion*, by the author of *Ecce Homo*, which I *don't* recommend to you, for it is depressing, and practically atheistic. Art and Science are to be, it seems, the one solid religion of the future. If so, God help us! But I don't believe it. I believe that this worship of Science, and this pagan pursuit of Beauty, will pall sooner or later. It will not avail us if great national or personal chastisements come upon us. . . . Did you ever know (talking of artists) one of the name of Edward Burney, a half-brother, I believe, of Madame D'Arblay. There is a pretty story of him in Lamb's *Essays*, "Valentine's Day."

'God bless you, dear Friend. I hope we shall meet again before very long.—We all send love: yours affectionately,

'Alfred Ainger.'

And here too belongs the note which he wrote at her death, to her great friend, Mrs. Lewes.

'Callander House,
'Clifton, *July* 23, 1887, 3 p.m.

'Dear Friend,—It is just three o'clock and my heart is very full of you all. It is the greatest grief and disappointment to me that I am not with you, and I have only given it up because there was risk of its interfering with work here for which I am responsible. You will not judge me severely, nor would our dear one departed.

'The sorrow is a great one to me, and will never cease to be a part of my life, so I pray to God. I cannot tell you what a loss to my *life*, and to my *spirit*, will be the taking away from me of this almost daily interest, and my dear girls loved her as much as I did, and I know she was truly attached to *them*. But no true and real joy of this kind ever dies. It only takes new forms (like

force, so the men of science tell us), and I am sure that the pleasure and profit of her friendship will be a spring of strength to me all my days. No *love*, thank God, is ever allowed to perish, or to become fruitless.

'I know what this will be to you and yours, and it is of you I am thinking as I write. I hope you will let me come over to Crockham, to the Cottage, when I am back in London and you are again staying there.—No more. Your ever faithful friend,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

But this is to forestall time. In the days of which we are speaking he still had ten years in which to enjoy Miss Gillies's company. To new friends, such as she was, he turned for distraction, but for help and for counsel he still went to the old ones. The following letters to Miss Thompson show the anxieties that troubled him, more especially in 1877, when his eldest nephew, Tom, was setting off for New Zealand, to make his first start in life there.

'2 UPPER TERRACE,
'*Thursday Evening, Oct.* 19, 1876.

'DEAREST MARY,—I almost fear you won't see me to-morrow. I have been so ill all day, with swelled face (it is *not* parlous painful) and a racking headache which *is*. . . . Nothing can exceed the thoughtfulness and attention of my housekeeper to-day in inventing and serving up things that she thought my poor jaw could dispose of, and that would *tempt* me. I am inclined to say, slightly altering Shenstone's lines—

"Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round
Where'er his doubtful path he urges,
May sigh to think he still has found
His kindest cook—in Mrs. Burgess";

but this is a lie, for I know you 'll all ransack your brains to-morrow to think what will do me good. God bless you. Oh, dear Mary, I have had so little bodily pain that I have been feeling, like Dr. Arnold, quite thankful to God to-day for giving me some, that I may know what it is and take soberer views of life and men.

'My kitten has grown into quite a young lady during my

long absence—in fact she may now be considered as being "out"—and she lurks about the house in a way that I fear will be the worst possible example for Addie. All this afternoon she has been frisking about the hall outside my den, in a way that reminded me, tell the girls, of those light-hearted *rats* who used to take dancing-lessons over our heads at Elderton.'

'*April* 12, 1877.

'DEAREST MARY,—Thanks for your letter, which I read while I breakfasted in bed this morning. Tom came home last evening. It is such a lovely day, after the deluge of yesterday. I quite agree about the desirability of Tom starting from London, and shall tell him so. He seems in very good spirits—but oh! my dearest, I don't like the parting at all—though it is for the best, I feel assured. It is at these times that one is forced to see that one *must* trust God, and that one is helpless to "help ourselves." I have tried to do the best for him, as for them all—and can only humbly hope I haven't made any *great* mistakes.

'2 UPPER TERRACE,
'HAMPSTEAD, *Friday Night, Dec.* 19.

'MY DEAREST MARY,—My friend, Mr. Bain of the Haymarket, is sending you (I hope), at my request, a copy of Shakespeare which I want you to accept in the name of all three of us—I mean the girls and myself—as a mere memorial, or pepper-corn acknowledgement, of all we owe to you for your loving ministrations—during the last two years, I was going to say, but I mean really during all our lives!

'You will not, dear Friend, regard it as more than this; for we do not wish, even if we could, to wipe off obligations, as we would pay our grocer; but we are quite content that the account should remain open, to be added to as often as possible. Only I would not dismiss with a jest the subject of our long term of loving obligation. I have had many true and loyal friends in my life, thank God—but none, I think, whose friendship has been so loyal, and so unselfish as yours. Our hearts will supply what is wanting in the way of words. I would only say, may you find in us only a tithe of what you have been able to supply to *us*.

'We hope you will like the copy both in its interior and exterior. It was originally intended for your birthday, but the

girls' extended absence from home interfered with the original plan. It is the only edition of Shakespeare I know that avoids the two extremes of *bigness* and *smallness*. It is really a handy size for having in one's easy-chair. As an edition with notes, etc., it is nearly as good as any that is yet published.

'We were truly sorry to hear of Robert's illness. Let him "make an effort" and be all right by Christmas Day, when we hope to be very merry and witty.—Ever, dearest Friend, your loving ALFRED AINGER.'

'HAMPSTEAD, *Nov.* 25.

'DEAREST MARY. . . . I am sure your district must want help. So I am sending you my Christmas offering, a little *larger*, and a little *earlier*, than usual. I have meant to do this in some or other direction—for I have been making some odds and ends of money by writing and lecturing lately, and my conscience began to *smite* me! So please don't thank me, or say anything about it. As to boots, bless you, ma'am, I 've three or four pair at your service, and only wait for instructions from you *where* to forward them. Have you any Dépôt in the East End, where they could go direct?'

'UPPER TERRACE,
'HAMPSTEAD, *Wednesday.*

'DEAREST MARY,— . . . I have been rather depressed by dyspepsia this vacation, and when that is the case I shrink from writing, because it shows itself in my letters, and I can't bear to depress other people. . . . Don't allude, in writing to the girls, to my having workmen in the house. I am preparing a little surprise for them.'

In 1878, Miss Thompson's ministrations were in urgent request, for Ainger fell seriously ill with a kind of brain fever and prostration of body and mind. Legends long remained in the family of the ladies who wrote verses, of the flowers that were sent, of the callers who 'streamed in' on this occasion.

When he was really ill he was a model patient, but there was no telling at what moment his vitality might reawake, and the doctors must have been bewildered when, after they

had been injecting morphia, he suddenly roused himself to say—

'These doctors' ways are so newfangled,
Their latest twist about is thus,
We used to lie in the arms of Morphy;
Now Morphy lies in the arms of us.'

An atmosphere of improvisation surrounded his sick bed, and fresh poems, from the pens of old comrades, cheered his convalescence—

'The Faithful J.
In his friendly way
Of keeping *au fait*,
A friend of A.
In the Danelagh,
Has written to say
He was fairly progressing yesterday.

How gladly would I
Were Hampstead nigh,
In hansom fly,
To bell apply,
Catch Doctor's eye,
For entrance try,
Sit bedside by,
Smooth patient's pillow; he knows for why.'

Thus wrote his great friend, Adolphus Ward, who was now Head of Owens College, Manchester. His, too, are the unacademic hexameters that follow—

'Truly I thank Miss Thompson, benevolent amanuensis.
Friend in the hour of need, and envy of me who am useless,
Truly I thank her for writing the words that came from your pillow,
Genuine, far from spurious, words, and cheerful and kindly.
But when strength has returned, the gift of a merciful Heaven,
Alfred himself shall sit at his desk, the deftly constructed,
And from his pen shall flow for a while not sermons or lectures,
(Though their time shall come before long, and the choir of the Temple,
Duly chant harmonious response to the voice of the Reader),
But the short letters of friendship, the cheer and joy of the distant,
Witty with Alfred's wit, and tender with Alfred's affection.'

Soon after his recovery Ainger went to Scotland, to the house of the Walter Evanses, some friends he had recently

made. The writer and the reader of his biography must become aware of one thing, that his life was a chronicle of friendships; that friendships were its events, the agencies which, in many instances, determined his fate. No life was more personal than his—none, perhaps, so full of human ties. 'I met some charming people to-night, we have sworn an eternal friendship,' his customary remark when he came home from a party, was very nearly true. For in unofficial relations, he hardly understood the word acquaintance; he either knew well, or he did not know at all. When he liked people, he impressed them with a strange sense of intimacy—though seldom one of familiarity—and there were few among his companions who would not have felt sure, like Dickens's Mr. Tremlow, that they were 'his oldest friends.'

Mr. and Mrs. Evans, in their turn, made a great change in his existence. Chance brought them together. He had planned a visit to the Atkinsons, who now lived in Derbyshire, but found that they were staying with their neighbours, the Walter Evanses, who owned Darley Abbey, a stately place not far from Derby. Its hospitable owners suggested that Ainger should also be their guest there. He accepted their proposal; he came, he saw, he was conquered. Mrs. Evans was partly Russian, a good talker, and a reader well-versed in many tongues, while her husband, a descendant of the lady who once asked Coleridge to be her children's tutor, had great scientific knowledge and a good deal of taste for poetry and pictures. Ainger himself has left a full account of the family antecedents:—

'Yes,' he writes to Mr. Dykes Campbell, 'you are quite right in divining that Coleridge's *Mrs. Walter Evans* is an ancestor of my friend, Walter Evans, whose guest at the present moment I am. She was his grandmother, and was by birth a *Strutt*. Her father was the founder of the family of Strutt, since so eminent in cotton spinning, and the head of whom now is Lord Belper. Curiously enough, another of her grandsons, Mr. T. W. Evans, late member for South Derbyshire, was here this week, and told me a good deal about the lady in question—much that I will tell you also, when we meet—for it is long to write. The family knew that Coleridge had been acquainted with their grandmother; and Miss

Gisborne, a sister-in-law of T. W. Evans, tells me she believes there was some proposal that Coleridge should be tutor to Mrs. Walter Evans' children.

'But since I had this conversation with Mr. T. W. Evans, I have come upon a curious passage in one of Lamb's letters (see Fitzgerald's edition for the passage is omitted in Hazlitt's). It is in a letter to Wordsworth, that in which he relates the well-known story of the Man in the Office, who, hearing Lamb speak of an Epithalamium of Spenser's, at once concluded it was William *Spencer*, the fashionable poet, of that day. Lamb goes on to say of the man in the office, that he is a "brother of that Miss Evans whom Coleridge narrowly escaped marrying." Don't you think that this is Lamb's mistake here for Mrs. Evans?[1] I should be glad to have any other extracts from the letters to Thelwall in which her name occurs. I hear that she *was* a very remarkable woman, and that a good many of her letters are in existence.'

But what drew him especially to these new acquaintances was the fact that they were just emerging from a heavy sorrow, the loss of their only boy, and were trying to take interest in life again after a period of seclusion. He had a feeling that they were just the people to draw out his nieces, and wrote home that he had discovered exactly the right friends for them. He persuaded his unwilling wards to go when they were asked, with the result that the Evanses then and there adopted them as their own, with a warmth which was readily returned. These new daughters came at a right moment; they helped to fill an empty place, and their friends soon grew dependent on their presence. From this time onwards, the two girls spent several months of every year at Darley Abbey and every summer at the Evanses' house in Scotland, where their uncle also regularly joined them for his holiday.

This arrangement was bound to affect him considerably, though the loss of home companionship was amply compensated by the interests he gained, and by the lightening of his responsibilities naturally brought about by the advent of these kind new guardians. Their home in the Highlands became

[1] It is now known that this was not so, the girl whom Coleridge cared for in his youth being Miss Mary Evans, a young woman of comparatively humble parentage.

his house of convalescence on more occasions than one. But never did it serve its purpose better than this year after his illness, or leave more festive impressions of his good company. There was one especial rainy day, memorable to all who were present, when he acted *Heads and Tails* from first to last by heart, keeping his audience unmindful of anything but the fun within-doors.

Christmas time always found him re-united to his family. He had the real Dickens sentiment for Christmas—for its festive doings and its fond memories. We have spoken of the letters that for thirty years he wrote every Christmas Eve to Mrs. Smith at Sheffield, regularly posting them with his own hand to make sure of her receiving them at a particular hour. And there can be no fitter ending to a chapter on this period than extracts from one or two out of the bundle that he sent her.

'2 Upper Terrace,
'Hampstead, *Christmas Eve.*

'My dear Friend,—This year Christmas Eve falls on a Monday, and is therefore (for us poor clergy) a narrow isthmus between two Sundays, and what with the fatigue of yesterday and the anticipations of to-morrow, I fear I have not much mental energy, or vivacity, to bestow upon my old Sheffield friends. But never mind! the heart is in the right place, though the intellect may be overclouded; and I am quite sure that the former is that department of my organisation that those I love best to call *friends* will be most concerned about.

'You have heard of the gentleman of whom one of his acquaintances said with scorn that he had "muddled away" a fine fortune in paying tradesmen's bills. . . . You need not expect me at this frivolous season to "muddle away" my letter with telling you *news*. They must wait for a more matter-of-fact time. My object has hitherto been to provide you with a few Cracker mottoes for your Christmas dinner. Stories for the soup; facetiæ for the fish; anecdotes for the "ang-trées"; jokes for the joint; tit-bits for the turkey; extra plums for the pudding; and conundrums for the cheese. . . .

'But it is ill jesting with an aching heart, and after all, sentiment will have its way, do what we will. And I don't want

you to think that my remembrances of my old Sheffield days and Sheffield friends are all of this flippant cast. How I should like to be with you all again for an indefinite period; and walk on the breezy downs all morning, and "lose my voice with hollering of" anthems and glees all evening; or go a-fishing with William on the Derbyshire streams, and take just *one* glass of gin and peppermint at Fox House on our way back. Ah, me! ah, me! the days that are no more. It is no use. Drive out serious thoughts —they *will* come back. William will quote you Horace to this effect if you give him a chance.

'God bless you all, my dear children, and give you the best kind of happiness for the new year, and all years to come.—Your affectionate friend, ALFRED AINGER.'

'2 UPPER TERRACE, HAMPSTEAD.

'My pen seems hardly dry, my dear friend, since I laid it down, a whole year ago, after sending my Christmas greetings for the year 1883. And now, it has come round again; and Time has gone at such a pace in the interval that I feel as if I had been imposed upon somehow. I am afraid the fact is that as we get all of us a *little* older, this phenomenon is generally observable. The "rapid of Time," as Lord Tennyson calls it, "hurries toward the fall." Well, let us make the most of the vanishing years, and above all things, let us see that we do not lose any old and valued friendships in the course of them. . . .

'I am writing under trying circumstances. The Waits are singing a Christmas carol under my windows, and not even my seraphic temper (which at this season of the year is peculiarly angelic) can quite hold out against this—my nieces are expecting a hamper, or a parcel, or something, and as just before Christmas, the pressure on the Parcels Delivery people is something perfectly awful, the probability is that the parcel will arrive about *half-past one* in the morning, and unless I like to be roused out of my beauty-sleep, and open the front door in the face of a cutting east wind, and produce fivepence and sign a paper in my nightshirt, I shall be obliged to sit up and ruin my constitution by losing my natural night's rest. How, then, can you expect me to write you a nice, cheerful, jocular Christmas letter?

'I wonder how the dinner will go off, and who will be with you—a happy family party in any case, and I hope as you see them all gathered round you, you will be thankful that you are more united than the C—— family.

'. . . Should any one present be guilty of any inelegancies of speech or grammatical confusions, you would do well to cite the sad but well-authenticated instance of the Oxford undergraduate, who, having accidentally exchanged hats with another gentleman at a party, wrote to him next morning the following letter:—

'"Mr. Smith presents his compliments to Mr. Jones, and he has a hat which isn't *mine*; so if you have a hat which isn't *his*, no doubt they are the ones." The relation of this terrible example will doubtless induce Jim to set about the study of English Composition with great zeal and diligence. I shall be glad to hear that my godson is working hard and is prepared to confer distinction alike upon his college, and his family and friends, at Pembroke next October.

'Dear friend, . . . When once this season is over, I am again as grave as a judge, and as solemn as the Reader of the Temple. I wish William had been at the Temple last Sunday week, when I preached my sermon on Dr. Johnson, for I think he would have sympathised with my view. *Perhaps* I shall publish the sermon, and if so, a copy shall be addressed to Brocco Bank. You perhaps saw a short abstract of it in the *Times*. . . .'

The promise was not fulfilled, for the sermon was never published.

CHAPTER IX

DU MAURIER

It was in the seventies that Alfred Ainger and George du Maurier first met, but they did not become intimate until the early eighties, when the chances of the hour brought them more frequently together. From that time onwards, for fifteen years, they always met once, and generally twice a day. Hampstead knew their figures, as every afternoon they walked round the pond on the Heath, deep in conversation. Edward FitzGerald himself never had a closer friendship than had these two men for one another. Their mental climates suited; they were akin, yet had strong differences. Perhaps, in the quickness of their mutual attraction, Frenchman recognised Frenchman. But Ainger was the French Huguenot and du Maurier was the French sceptic. Both had mercurial perceptions, and exercised them on much the same objects. Both were wits and humorists, but Ainger was more of a wit than a humorist, and du Maurier was more of a humorist than a wit. Both were men of fancy rather than imagination, men of sentiment rather than of passion. Both, too, were fantastics; both loved what was beautiful and graceful rather than what was grand; but du Maurier was more of the pure artist, while to Ainger the moral side of beauty most appealed. Ainger was irregular and formal; du Maurier was regular and a native of Bohemia, a country in which his friend had never set foot. Both men were gifted with an exquisite kindness, but Ainger's charity gained in warmth and depth from the presence of his religious faith. Du Maurier was the keener and clearer thinker of the two; he had the wider outlook and the fewer prejudices. Ainger's beliefs lent a new significance to his views and to his know-

ledge of his fellow-men. These good comrades were aware of their religious differences; but they knew that in this respect neither would affect the other, and they never discussed the matter. Nor did this division divide them, or at any time impair their relations.

They had from the first the power to exhilarate one another. Du Maurier would sit down at the piano and sing French ditties in his enchanting manner—*Au clair de la lune*, or *Malbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre*, or the English *Little Billee* —and Ainger would stand listening, till filled with fun and music, he would burst forth into some song or into one of his favourite entertainments. He had his own odd ways of showing 'sympathy with everything that breathes.' He would lie down in du Maurier's studio and suddenly turn into a donkey, with a donkey's countenance, rolling over and over and rubbing his back in great ease; or he would become a fly preening his wings; or a parrot drawing a cork with a hissing sound that no one else could produce; or a dog in all its moods, an impersonation that he liked giving in the company of the dog, who seldom failed to respond and acknowledge, as it were, a kind of kinship. Dogs, indeed, played a great part in his life. They instinctively followed him about, and his own terrier was his inseparable companion. From these Hampstead days onwards, he always had one such of his own. 'I, of course, keep my most important news till the end,' he once wrote; 'I've got a DOG in the house on trial, but I believe he's the coming hound. An affectionate beast—an Irish terrier—shortish hair, yellow, very well-bred, I'm told.' His dog was a sight familiar to all his neighbours; so, too, was du Maurier's; and Hampstead seldom saw the two friends without their two faithful canine counterparts.

The bonds between them were many. Ainger was a fine appreciator of drawing, and du Maurier's pictures delighted him. His 'extravagances' often consisted in one of the *Punch* drawings, of which several hung in his sitting-room. 'I shall indeed be proud and happy to have *two* "undoubted du Maurier" on my walls, "And lo! two puddings smoked upon the board" (Pope),' he writes in one of his first letters

to him. Another and a closer bond was *Punch* itself—*Punch* in its palmy days; and Ainger now became du Maurier's invisible and indefatigable partner in producing fun for its pages. It was work which was cut out for him, for he was a born editor —of other people's jokes—a *chef*, too, in the realm of wit, dishing up old materials with new sauces that made them unrecognisable. This faculty was really more marked in him than that for original *bons mots*, and the very salt of these, in his case, often consisted in the delicate skill of his adaptations. *Punch* was to him a delight from cover to cover. At his breakfast on Wednesdays, as he sat with the paper in his hands, he would suddenly be seen to shake with inward laughter, and when his nieces, anxious to share his mirth, would ask the cause, he would do his best to tell them, but, instantly repossessed by merriment, would relapse into his chuckles of enjoyment.

His interest in his favourite periodical was untiring :—

'We are very glad,' he writes to du Maurier in 1882, 'to hear of your good weather and happy doings in your northern abode. We gathered from your beautiful cartoon in *Punch* that fish was fairly cheap at your watering-place.

'We are all happy in our different occupations. I employ my mornings in annotating Lamb's *Essays*, and my afternoons in pursuing the wily trout, who, though small in size (a half-a-pound one causes an extraordinary sensation), are, by compensation, rather plentiful and easy of capture.

'Have you seen and read a new story, published by your friend, George Smith, called *Vice Versa*. It is one of the cleverest and most humorous books I have read for many a long day. I wish you would find out who wrote it. I presume the name given, "F. Anstey," is a *nom de plume* merely. The man has extraordinary talent, in my judgment.'

The following notes were also written—later—during an absence from Hampstead :—

'Dear Boy,—Your letter did my heart good. I am glad you like my *Type Writer* notion. Why not have, the week following, a companion picture.

'"Jones's letter does not produce a corresponding impression on Miss Smith." She opens and reads:—

'My own Angel——

or something to this effect.

'*How* good *Punch* is this week! One of the very best I have ever read—cuts *and* letter-press. Who wrote "A City Idyl"? It is inimitably funny.

'I had quite forgotten "Past praying for," and it made me laugh as if it had been some one else's. Ha! Ha!—Your own

'Alfred Ainger.

'I enclose a fragment of real type-writing as a pattern!'

'Prospect House, Clifton Hill,
'Bristol, *Dec.* 26, 1888.

'Dear Friend,—Your long and most kind letter did me good! All best wishes for you all for the blessed new year when it comes. I hope to be back in Hampstead on Tuesday next, and shall lose no time in seeing you—and if you *have* a vacant evening that week I shall ask to come and spend it with you.

'I am charmed with the "E minor Fugue" to-day, and shall be anxious to know if it proves to be a *Chestnut*. If it does, *you* will be roasted, instead of the Chestnut.

'(Ha! Ha!—but no matter!)

'I heard a funny thing last evening from the same friend who gave me the "bull's-eye" subject. It was overheard in a railway carriage. Smith and Jones talking about a recently established foreign Emperor—(German!):—

'*Jones.* "They tell me that unfortunately he is very *bellicose*."

'*Smith.* "Dear me! You surprise me! I always understood he was rather tall and slim!"

'Is not this enlivening?

'I am glad to hear you have done the Type-writer. I had thought of adding to the legend—"His fellow clerks cannot quite make out what branch of the correspondence he is engaged upon."

'I will bring you back Jusserand's book, which is excellent. I mean to buy all his books. My dear friend, Ward, of Owens College, tells me the book about the English Highways of the fifteenth century is admirable. He is certainly a remarkable man.

'. . . *A bientôt*—dear comrade and faithful friend.

'Best love to all.—Your own, Alfred Ainger.'

Sometimes in their walks they had a keen discussion upon some unrecorded topic, at which we can easily guess by the trials of skill which they engendered. Now it is Ainger who makes honourable amends for some error concerning a French word :—

'18 *juillet* 1858. Aujourd'hui j'ai été remué jusqu'au fond par la *nostalgie* du bonheur et par les appels du souvenir.

'(Fragment d'un Journal Intime—*H. F. Amiel,* ii. 135).

'Bully for you ! dear friend, A. Ainger.

'My captious cavils I 'll henceforth retrench ;
Nor charge my friend with *ignorance of French.*'

Now it is du Maurier who takes up the pen in praise of classical metre :—

'O ! délicieux anapeste ! élégant dactyle !
Doux spondée ! aimable trochée ! Iambe de bouton !
Si le roi m'avait donné Paris sa grand' ville,
Et qu'il fallût vous quitter, je lui dirais non !

'Vous combinez quelques mots—tant de pieds par ligne—
Sans cadence ou rythme aucuns—sans accents divers !
Et vous vous imaginez, O folie insigne !
Pourvu que le nombre y soit, que ça fait un vers !

'Où sont vos dactyles, donc ? où sont vos spondées—
Tout cet attirail forgé par la tradition ?
Comme en cet affreux latin qu'on parle aux lycées,
Vous n'en faites cas aucun, plus qu'un pauvre pion !'

Unimportant trifles, these rhymes of a moment—little feathers of intercourse—yet more significant of happy companionship than many pages of description. And, as in all his other friendships, the intimacy was extended to du Maurier's family circle. It was one of the secrets of Ainger's charm that his affections were not exclusive, and that when he made choice of a comrade he included the comrade's belongings. He was welcome to all the du Mauriers, wife and girls and boys alike, and a natural figure at their hearth, which counted among his many homes.

Their relations became less frequent after 1887. At this date Alfred Ainger was given a Canonry at Bristol, which

involved his residing there for three months of every year. It was not perhaps the place he would have chosen, or that others would have chosen for him. A canonry at Westminster was what he most desired. 'If I were only a Canon *at Westminster* my highest ambition would be attained,' he wrote six years later to a friend. Failing that, the cool cloisters of Canterbury, the old-world precincts of Wells, the storied purlieus of York or Lincoln, would have been a fitter background for his figure than the great commercial town, in spite of St. Mary Redcliffe and the ghosts of Chatterton and Coleridge. But after he had gone to live there, after Bristol had grown to mean human beings and become a city of friends, he quickly learned to look on it as home, and to find happiness both in his work and his surroundings.

And he had other consolations:—

'I owe you many thanks for many things always—and not least for your kind congratulations on the Canonry,' he wrote to Mr. Dykes Campbell. 'I am afraid (so strong is my *un*-professional bias) that when I was offered this distinguished honour my first thought was "How nice it will be to explore *old* Bristol some day with Dykes Campbell, and hunt up the houses and other relics of Southey, Cottle, and the rest." And so we will, please God, some day—and you shall take me over to Clevedon and Nether Stowey.'

'Canonries do not come every day, nor jubilees either,' he said to another correspondent. 'I have had so many kind letters on the occasion (so rich am I in friends) that I have not begun to think of the possibility of acknowledging them in order.'

He liked the recognition of his services, even if it were not the ideal one. It was not the first tribute received by him. Already in 1885, the University of Glasgow had made him an honorary LL.D.—an additional proof, if one were needed, of the effect produced by his lectures, given from time to time both in Glasgow and Edinburgh. He greatly enjoyed the journey to Scotland on this occasion.

'I got your pleasant letter from Syracuse on the *papier du pays*,' he wrote to Malcolm Macmillan '. . . and deciphered it in the railway-carriage going down to Glasgow—where I have been LL.D.'d, if you please—and if you ask me what led the Glasgovians

to think of "poor little *me*" for such an honour, I can only say I'm (LL.)D.'d if I know. . . .

'When I came down from Glasgow town
I *was* a comely sicht to see.
My Hood was made of black velvet,
And deftly lined with Cramoisie.
'(*Old Scots Ballad.*)'

These were, perhaps, his busiest years. In 1881, Alexander Macmillan asked him to undertake the *Life of Lamb* for the Men of Letters Series; in 1883, he set to work upon his edition of Lamb's *Essays*; and, in 1887, upon that of Lamb's *Letters*, in two volumes—all for the same publisher. These tasks were the mainspring of his fame as a writer; they comprised his chief literary achievement; they gave him his niche in the field of literature, and marked him out as the lover of Elia, with whose name his was henceforth associated. In this way they made an epoch in his life, and deserve to be fully chronicled in a separate chapter.

Meanwhile he took a house every year at Bristol, or to speak more accurately, at Clifton, the high-lying suburb of the town; and here, when his time came round, he installed himself and his family. The upheaval from Hampstead, at first disturbing, soon became a habit, and it certainly had one advantage for his friends—it compelled him to write more letters. Du Maurier got the most of them and, after 1888, the correspondence was further increased, for then the du Mauriers also moved from Hampstead into town. 'I am glad to hear of the Mansion—but "Oh, the difference to me!"' wrote Ainger, then at Clifton; and he felt it sadly when he came back to Upper Terrace and missed the daily walks on the Heath. But he was constantly at 'the Mansion' in Porchester Terrace, and distance did not weaken his devotion.

A list of the endings to Ainger's letters to 'his Artist' is in itself an epitome of their mutual relations: 'Your own Canon,' 'Your love-sick Canon,' 'Your own Canon in (undesirable) residence,' 'Your Canon in partibus,' 'Your own flippant Canon,' or 'A Continuance of power to your elbow is

the earnest wish of, dear Sir, your affectionate humble servant, Samuel Johnson '— these are a few among many, and the letters themselves, which cover fourteen years, always remain equally expansive. The earlier ones that follow tell their own story.

PS.—A Canon has no special costume, but should look severely ecclesiastical—and have a *small* Rosette in the front of his hat-band.

DRAWBACKS TO THE POSITION.

Street of fashionable Cathedral town. Cathedral Dignitary walking out with two nieces. Little dog disappearing in the distance.

Mildred (in agony). Oh! Uncle! *do* whistle to Flossy—she 'll be lost.

Cath. Dig. My love, I 'm the New Canon—*and I daren't.*

'Dearest of friends and correspondents!—The climate is so hot and relaxing that I am not up to much, but the sight of your hand-writing helped me materially—so please repeat the prescription. I was indeed delighted to hear that the R. incident had (as you say) brought us all luck—I hope Miss R. (being Scotch) can get the joke into her system without the well-known operation. That naturally reminds me that Sydney Smith was once a Canon here—before he was Canon of St. Paul's. So there is precedent, Sir, for any flippancy that you may detect in my words or conduct. We are all very happy here—save that the air does *not* do after Hampstead. It is wonderfully pure and sweet and delicious, but it lets me down any number of pegs. All the neighbours and surrounding inhabitants are most kind. They call upon us in their thousands. I hope Mr. and Mrs. Evans may come to us for a few days at the end of next week. Then the week after we have another old friend—then the first fortnight of August I shall be able to get away a little, for the Cathedral (Dom-Kirche) is closed for repairs. Then my girls go to Scotland, and I shall be left rather too much to myself, but I hope to persuade a few stray bachelor friends to come and pay me a series of visits.

'What about the "Day in the Country"? Shall I see it in *Punch*? I hope so. What is Anstey Guthrie doing? I begin to fear there are to be no more Amateur Reciters. I wish I could

have told you of something to draw concerning Miss Cass! But I never joke on such matters—never.

'. . . No more to-day—but more to come. I am going to send you a Tailor's pattern-book of Ecclesiastical *costumes* for your guidance in *Punch*. Love from us all—ever and ever yours,

'A. A.'

'Callander House,
'Clifton, Bristol, *Friday, August* 26, 1887.

'My dear Artist and Friend,—You are very good in writing to me, and I have made but a bad return. But the weather has been *so* hot—*so* hot—and I have had no sea-breezes to temper the rays of the sun to the shorn priest. I am so glad to think of you and the dear girls (to say nothing at all of Madame) getting the bracing air and exercise I am sure they all needed; and I hope Silvia's ("Lovers" I was going to say)—but I mean rheumatism—has become a thing of the past, and that in future it will "toil after her in vain."

'Your picture of the family going to the sea-side is charmingly conceived and drawn—but dear boy, has it not been *done before*? I am as sure as I am of most things that Leech (or yourself) had a picture of a sneak of a husband getting "out of it" by going on ahead, or staying behind, to avoid the luggage and the turmoil. By my Halidome, but I will well nigh hazard my reputation for accuracy on this.

'This is the dull season here—all Clifton being at the sea-side or among the mountains. My Maggie is already in Scotland, and Ada and Bentley follow next week. Then I shall have a male friend or two staying with me for a few days at a time, till the end of September is reached—and *then* I must get a little bracing at the sea or among mountains for a week or two, to prepare for the winter solstice. There really looks as if there were going to be *rain* to-day. It will be abundantly welcome.

'I am very happy in my work here, and have leisure also to get on with my edition of Charles Lamb's *Letters*, which is now really on the way to be finished, health permitting, in another six weeks or so—and will be out, I hope, on this side of Christmas.

'Write again, dear boy. Your letters are always a delight to me. Best love and regards to you all (not forgetting the dear Don and the amiable "Dachs")—Your own stern critic, but affectionate friend,

A. Ainger.'

'TULLIBELTON, BANKFOOT,
'PERTH, SCOTLAND, 12*th Sept.* 1888.

'MY DEAR FRIEND,—We have read in the *Times* with great interest of the birth of another grandson, and we are anxious to know that all is going well with the dear mother and her babe —so, if this reaches you, please send me one line (or *more*), with news of you and yours, all round. Since writing to you last, I paid an unexpected visit to Cornwall. The Lord Chancellor very kindly asked me to come and spend a few days with him at Launceston. I stayed there from last Saturday week till the following Wednesday, and had a good time. They drove me to the North Cornish Coast, Tintagel (King Arthur's birth-place), Boscastle and other romantic spots.

'Last Sunday we drove over to Dunkeld to Church, and whom should I meet coming out but Sir John Millais. We recognised each other, and he was very kind and civil, and has asked me to go over one day to lunch—so I have just written to propose a day. Evans has a "Beat" (as it is called) on the same river, the Tay. The fishing has not been very first-rate this season. They want *water*, oddly enough. However, I believe Evans and Ada and guests with him have already killed about twenty-three fish.

'We were all inordinately delighted with "Awful Revelations" and want to know whether, in a moment of inspiration, you invented it. It is *so* good—it seems as if it *must be* old! Does the following strike you as funny? I should call it "a little learning is a dangerous thing"! A proud mother showing her little boy to the clergyman. "You see, Sir—he was our eighth child—and so we christened him *Octopus*." This *did* occur, and is *not* a chestnut. Our best love and regards to all. Write soon; ever yours,

ALFRED AINGER.'

'2 ROYAL YORK CRESCENT,
'CLIFTON, BRISTOL, *August* 28, 1889.

'MY DEAR KICKY,—Your letter was welcome as the Flowers in May! I am so glad to think you are in La Belle France, and also drinking in Ozone—which, in spite of Local Concerts, ought to do you much good. My nephew Bentley is here with me for a few days, and is in *ecstatic* delight with your treatment of "Our Curates" which appears in to-day's *Punch*. You have indeed done it admirably. The joke came originally from my nephew, so he glows with honest pride.

'What do you think of the following? Bishop's daughter asked to valse, replies:—

'"Thanks! But I never dance Round Dances in my father's diocese." I should call it "Filial Piety." Your sea-sick picture is also very good. Bully for you! By the way the new man (who is he?) is very clever surely in his '1789 and 1889—the "Tale of Two Cities."' The faces are very good. Her Gracious Majesty suffers High Treason at the hands of poor old ——.

'I never read anything funnier of Guthrie's than the "*franchement canaille*" Music Hall song, a few weeks since about the "Bloomin' 'orse."

'. . . When are you to be home again at Hampstead? I shall be there very early in October if all goes well with life and health, and our many schemes and projects.

'My old Dean (90 in the shade!) is very old and feeble of body, but clear and keen of mind. But his life, I feel it, hangs on a thread. The weather here is perfect just now, though a trifle *chill*, becoming *October*; it reminds me that at church on Sunday next at Birnam I may meet old Millais or some of his family. I hope at least he is still at the old place.—Best love to all from the "Strict Canon."

'*PS.*—Vivent Athos, Porthos et Aramis!'

'33 Royal York Crescent,
'Clifton, Bristol, *December* 9, 1889.

'My Dear Artist,— . . . What on earth has come to people's sense of humour—or standard of it. The *Times* quotes extracts [from the Christmas number of *Punch*] of "exceptional brilliancy"—and one is, that a man says he could not ride through the streets of Venice because they were so unusually wet, owing doubtless to *recent rains*. Great Heavens! and this is what we are expected to worship as the cream of Humour in our day!

'Both your pictures in last week's *Punch* are much admired down here. Have you heard much about them in London? What do you think of *this* (a Fact)? Professor Muffkins (the eminent Ornithologist) to the lady next him at dinner: "I was afraid till the last moment I might not have been able to come to-night, for my colleague, Professor Snuffkins, and I have been taking it in turns to lie in bed all day, hatching a very rare egg."

'We are having horrid weather, and are in lodgings where all the meat is tough and the cooking very poor. But it is not for very long.

'How are you all? Best love to the whole dear circle.—Your own (only genuine) CANON.'

Professor Muffkins and Professor Snuffkins, whether fact or fancy, did not gain admittance into *Punch*, although most of his suggestions did. Du Maurier delighted in them, and his answers show an adequate exuberance, but unfortunately few of his letters were preserved. Such as remain perhaps find a fitting place here, in the record of the years that saw their most frequent intercourse. The first was written early in their friendship when du Maurier was in Scotland on a holiday, the second, another summer, from Dieppe.

'ST. ANDREWS, *September* 21.

'MY DEAR AINGER,—We have just returned from staying a few days in Aberdeenshire (Haddo House), and I find your letter just arrived, whereat I was most muchly delighted. Thanks for the *pour manger* joke, although I fancy it must have occurred before; I will try it on my blessed editor whom I shall probably see on Wednesday, for lo! we start to-morrow for Ramsgate where we have appointed to meet Charlie and Trixie, who will not come all the way here—we shall be there just one week, and then return home after a very pleasant holiday. I hope you find it so likewise. Pray commend me to the Stephensons and give my love to dear Charles Keene—whom you will love as I do, and as everybody does—the oddest, kindest, nicest old boy in the world.

'Sylvia and I enjoyed ourselves hugely at Millais' and I have many amusing stories of him to tell you; our stay with Lord and Lady Aberdeen was also most pleasant. They are wonderfully courteous and considerate people, and I don't wonder at their great popularity in their part of the world.

'St. Andrews is a very nice place, given up to golfing. I am not and never should be a golfer, nor you, I fancy. . . A bientôt, cher ami, en vous serrant le main à vous démantibuler le métacarpe.—Je reste, tout à vous. G. DU MAURIER.

'*PS.*—I spent all yesterday afternoon in drawing Trevelyan in the smoking-room at Haddo, but was not, I think, so successful as with you—although his adoring wife was pleased to praise it. He has a delightful face and is a delightful boy.

'Sylvia and May are both indignant at being called London-lovers. Bonny Scotland for ever!

'Mes hommages à Mlles vos nièces si elles sont toujours avec vous.—Love to A. A.'

'40 Rue Gambetta,
'Dieppe, *Sunday* (1889).

'My dear A. A.,—I was delighted to get your letter, to hear that things are going fairly well with you and yours.

'First of all, let me reassure you on the subject of the Picture Gallery picture. I did it and sent it in a month ago. It will no doubt appear, unless Frank objects to a St. Sebastian put in (*without* a halo—only arrows)! There was also a Prodigal Son with hogs, a Prometheus Vinctus with vulture and a centaur. By the way, thanks for the little boy who begs his mother not to ask how he behaved; capital! . . .

'We have been here since yesterday week. It is an agreeable place, as lively as can be; we are in the same house as fourteen years ago. The weather has been very mixed—when it's fine it's very very fine—when it's not it's horrid. There is a splendid band twice a day, a great institution when it rains, but so good it beguiles one into the Casino when it's fine and one ought to be in the air. There is also a great gambol—"les petits chevaux"—of race horses racing round a round table; one backs a number and wins or loses accordingly; I'm sorry to say my young people

are gamblers—yesterday May and Gerald won 44 francs between them!

'There are English residents who play lawn tennis—and call on visitors. The two chaplains have already called (high and low) and the consul, and the vice-consul, and others. There is no Newman Hall here that I know of.

'The bathing, although most decent, is very amusing to watch—no "puris naturalibus" as in Eastbourne or Shanklin.

'There is a dance at the Casino two or three times a week—Hampstead could not produce anything duller or decorouser. C'est un monde bourgeois—in *beau,* in *laid*! As for the town and *plage,* nothing can be livelier or more picturesque; we never tire of the long High Street, in spite of many smells. Everything is above board in France—no deception. If one could only *draw* these odours, on wood! However, they would not be fit for *Punch.*

'Trixy and Charlie are coming over for two or three days next week—race week; then he is going to Canada, and she and the children will come to us in Hampstead.

'I hope your pastel portrait will not efface those two famous ones!

'When shall we meet again?

'Kindest messages from all, and please commend us to your nieces' recollections.—Yours ever sincerely, G. DU MAURIER.

'*PS.*—(afternoon) The weather to-day is simply lovely; we are

going to the concert. It may interest you to know that the food is good here—"cuisine bourgeoise."'

ALREADY!

'We are trying hard to let our house altogether, but I fear with a slender chance of success. You are right—Hampstead is lovely, but dull.

'I am hard at work on the Almanac, on the back edition of the immortal P., on my lecture, which I am obliged to learn by heart on account of my liability to "migraine," or temporary blindness, which prevents me from reading, even the clearest and largest print. I've got about 18 or 20 of these to deliver in England and Scotland (always the same lecture of course)—*un père de famille est capable de tout:*

'Quand revenez-vous?
"Reviens, amy—trop longue est ta demeure."

(which is quoted from Ronsard—or else from Clément Marot—or else from Charles D'Orléans).

'Forgive this hurried callygraphy (carography). Kind regards to your nieces and to Mr. Evans. Love from all.—Yours ever,

'G. DU MAURIER.'

'*PS.*—I think I've told you all the news—for there is none. Happy families have no history.

'19 Porchester Terrace,
'*Easter Monday.*

'Caro et molto reverato mio Alfreddo,—I was truly glad to hear from you, as we were all wondering what had really become of you; it has not occurred to us that you were seedy, from seeing your name among the preachers.

'You are a most imprudent youth, and always were, as I have often told you, reckless of cold and fatigue. However, on the 9th prox., this poor scribe returns to Hampstead and means to look after you and speak to you with the wise severity of a father.

'I also have been seedy for the last month or more—a suppressed cold I fancy, combined with London and much dining about, and also (which is more creditable) a little overwork, for I have managed to paint three portraits in the last six weeks—two for love, namely Silvia and May—which you can see (along with many beautiful works of art in water colour) at 5 Pall Mall East, R.W.S. on payment of a shilling. The other (for love and money) of Beatrix Phillips, the daughter of my Jewish friend, the alderman sheriff; and so pleased are they that I am going to paint the sister and then the mother (with a possible chance of the cousins and the aunts—Baroness de Worms, perhaps) . . . Why were we not advised of your lecture at the R. I.? And could we have been privileged to hear it? . . . We had the faithful Collins and the brave Bret Harte, and spent a very pleasant evening. We were sorry you were unable to dine, it was a capital party and would have been capitaler if you had been one. . . .

'Yes, 'Appy 'Ampstead is dull, but 'elthy. . . .'

Du Maurier did not deal in good stories as much as his correspondent. Ainger felt aggrieved if he did not hear one, at least, a week—and if he could not hear a good one, he took a bad or a 'middling one,' and fashioned it to his purpose. His letters to du Maurier were, as we see, his chief vent for them, and it is in his correspondence with his other friends that we perceive the many sides of the man, though he seldom gave expression to his serious thoughts and criticisms. Some of these letters we are now about to give, as the best chronicle of his thoughts and moods at this period.

CHAPTER X

LETTERS

1880-1892

THE letters that follow cover the twelve years between 1880 and 1892. A good deal, as we know, had happened during that time. They had seen the completion of his work upon Lamb, the chief literary accomplishment of his life, as well as his promotion to the Canonry of Bristol, and the honour paid him by Glasgow, They had also brought him a fresh sorrow, for in 1885 his sister, Marianne, died almost as suddenly as Mrs. Roscow.

'I was, as you may imagine, weary in heart and body,' Ainger writes, in September 1885, to his friend, Miss Flora Stevenson. 'My dear sister's death was terribly sudden. She was on a visit to a half-sister of hers, at Upper Norwood. She was sitting quietly reading just before lunch on Saturday—when she broke a blood-vessel on the lung and died in a few minutes. She had been for years in very delicate health, but had been no worse than usual of late, and had written happily to us all a day or two before. Still we see abundant reason for thankfulness. She was among kind friends, and not in a lonely lodging, or (as it might easily have been) in a railway carriage, or out of doors, or among strangers.'

Perhaps he felt her death more because of the separation that distance had caused between them. Nor did trouble come alone. A year before her death he had lost his friend, Mimi von Glehn. And in 1889, Malcolm Macmillan perished tragically on a mountain expedition in Greece, the victim, it was practically certain, of the brigands who infested those parts. Old comrades, too, were disappearing—among them his loved teacher, Mrs. Menzies. After he had returned from attending her funeral, he sat for some time immovable on Hampstead heath, unconscious that a passer-by was watching

him. When he looked up and found himself observed—'I am sad to-day; I have lost one of my best friends'—was all he said.

Happily, throughout all these troubles, his varied duties and achievements were a source of help and satisfaction. They added also to the claims on him. For his work upon Lamb had brought him into contact with interesting new friends—with Edmund Gosse, with Andrew Lang, with Sidney Lee, with James Dykes Campbell. It is to an old comrade, Archdeacon Bather, who had a living near Shrewsbury, that the first three of the following letters are addressed:—

'HAMPSTEAD,
'*Monday, July* 26, 1880.

'MY DEAR HENRY,— . . . I hope you like George MacDonald's little book. It is curiously unequal, as a poem constructed on such a system was sure to be; but it is almost unique in modern religious literature, for a kind of gentle, genuine revival of the mysticism of the German mystics, and the *conceits* of Herbert and Vaughan. By the way, you may be glad to know, in the interest of friends, that his *Disciple and other Poems* is now to be got separately (3s. 6d.), and not merely in the collected Edition.

'Phillips Brooks has been in England, and preached in the Abbey, on July 4th, the anniversary of American Independence. I saw Stanley last Monday week, at the Grove Testimonial Presentation, and he told me it was a magnificent sermon. I did not hear he was to preach till it was all over. I hope I may have another chance.'

'DALNESS LODGE,
'TAYNUILT, *Wednesday, Sept.* 22, 1880.

'MY DEAR HENRY,— . . . Did you read in the *Times* of Stopford Brooke's secession from the Church, and union with the Unitarians? I confess I am very grieved. Not that I ever had any liking for him as a theologian, and I always read his sermons with a feeling of strong repulsion, but his change will bring great discredit upon the Broad Church party, with which Stopford Brooke's name is so intimately associated. I must say I think the open profession of Unitarianism is to Stopford Brooke's credit, for it has always been clear to me that—like Haweis, and I would add Stanley—there was nothing in his teaching to distinguish him from that body. Is it not true that there is *that* in a man's attitude towards sin, and way of deal-

ing with the subject, that tells one, (even when the divinity of our Lord is not at all in question or even referred to), whether it is at the root of a man's system or not? One *feels* that Kingsley *could* not be a Unitarian, on whatever religious subject he is writing; while one feels that Stanley and Stopford Brooke *are* essentially so. Won't the *Record* and the *Church Times* be in ecstasies! I want you to tell me if you have seen in the *Spectator*, or any other paper, any comments on the event, or any manifesto from Stopford Brooke himself.'

'HAMPSTEAD, *Feb.* 22.

'MY DEAR HENRY,—*A theological question!* St. Paul—(Romans v. and passim) says that between Adam's fall and the giving of the Law on Sinai, there was no *transgression* (παράβασις) only *sin* (ἁμαρτία).

'How do you imagine he conceived the moral government of the world to have been carried on in that interval? Where (*e.g.*) did a man like Joseph get his fine charity and goodness from—from a direct personal inspiration, or how? and how far was he responsible?—for certainly the people who perished in the flood were taken very seriously indeed, in this matter of responsibility. I have no doubt I am grossly ignorant, and that Hewin's favourite sixth standard girl could put me right in a moment—but have pity on the ignorance of a new Church Dignitary, and *tell* me your opinion. I am thinking of preaching on the subject next Sunday.

'I hope you get on nicely with Archidiaconal work, and are nicely *clothed* as well as being in your right mind.

'Have you seen my portrait and Memoir in *Vanity Fair*? It is good to be kept humble. Please expend sixpence on me—and hang me up (as high as Haman).'

To MR. MALCOLM MACMILLAN.

'2 UPPER TERRACE,
'HAMPSTEAD, *June* 28, 1882.

'MY DEAR MALCOLM,—. . . I hope soon to write and propose a day for coming down, when we will talk over a thousand things. I have read a lot of Seeley's new book; it is wonderfully stirring. But I find myself stopping now and then with a feeling of remonstrance—"Come, come, is not this a trifle too clever?"

"Who wrote Democracy?
Without naming names,
I say Henry J——s
He wrote Democracy."

It is a brilliant assimilation of his style, in any case. . . . Goodbye, old boy. I trust we shall soon meet face to face. Thanks for recent flippancies upon Post-cards and other favours duly received. —Yours ever affectionately, ALFRED AINGER.

'There is some "fine confused feeding" upon Mozley's volumes. James Bain is right.'

To MR. SMITH (of Brocco Bank, Sheffield).

'2 UPPER TERRACE,
'HAMPSTEAD, *October* 1884.

'MY DEAR SMITH,—Thank you for sending me your eminently sensible letter on Temperance *v.* Total abstinence. In support of the former virtue as against the latter, allow me to send you four admirable lines of Chaucer from *Troylus and Cressida*:—

> "In everything, I wit, there lieth mesùre;
> For though a man forbede drunkenness,
> He not forbids that every creature
> Be *drinkeless for alway*, as I guesse."

'So go on laying down a good sound claret for your friend A. A. when he comes to see you.—Love to you all.—Ever yours affectly.,
'A. AINGER.'

To MISS FLORA STEVENSON.

'KNAPDALE, UPPER TOOTING,
'*October* 28, 1885.

'MY DEAR MISS FLORA,—You are quite too good to me. As for the JAM, what can I say—but that I feel in Hamlet's language like "my Lord Such-an-one, who praised my Lord Such-an-one's horse, *when he meant to beg it.*" How can I again ever order the real thing, with any delicacy. . . . Seriously, how good of you —and if stolen sweets are proverbially sweet, how sweet will these Brambles be. The wilderness will blossom like a rose . . . Please tell Miss Louisa that I have not forgotten my promise to pay interest on her loan of the *Essays of Elia*, and that I have directed my bookseller to send her *my* Edition, in the Preface and notes to which I think she may find some "fine confused feeding" —as your countryman said of the sheep's-head.—Yours and hers, always, ALFRED AINGER.'

'*August* 1886.

'During my illness I read Miss Austen (*Pride and Prejudice*)

once more; and now I am reading the *Bride of Lammermoor*, and so you see I am true to the good old models. How utterly melodramatic and stagey much of Scott's dialogue is—and how full of charm and life and variety he is, in spite of it all.'

(After the gift of a book from Miss Stevenson.)

'You know how I love John Brown, and how I rank him with the sweetest, purest, tenderest, as well as most poetic and graphic and humorous of writers who adorn our literature; and every fresh help to knowing and understanding him better, I truly value.

'. . . Maggie was saying the other day that she had been very remiss in never sending a definite message of thanks to you for the *Edinburgh Rock*. (It sounds like the name of an Evangelical newspaper.)'

To Mr. Malcolm Macmillan.

'2 Upper Terrace, Hampstead,
'*Saturday Afternoon* [Spring 1886].

'Dear Boy,—. . . I dreamed last night that you and a *German governess* in your family made me a joint present of a very shabby annotated edition of Izaak Walton. If incongruity can go farther than this I trouble you! Just before going to bed I had been reading Andrew Lang's delightful little book *Letters to Dead Authors* (sent me for Review), and in it is one addressed to the "quaint old cruel coxcomb." *Hinc*, I presume, *illa somnia*. . . .'

'The Vicarage, Meole Brace,
'Shrewsbury, *May* 6, 1886.

'My dear Malcolm,—All your post-cards with conundrums and epigrams to hand, and duly noted; one of the latter, oddly enough, reminded me in its rhymes of an old one of my own made years ago when R. H. Hutton praised some very mild piece of acting at a *Hamlet* performance:—

"There was an old critic named Hutton
For whose judgment I 'd not give a button;
For in saying, in fact,
That young —— can act,
He calls venison what *I* call *hashed mutton*."

"By a natural association of ideas, I must mention that I had a note from Mary Dickens this morning to tell me of the next Performance of the Dramatic Students next week (Thursday the

13th), at the Royalty: a play of the late James White's, *The King and the Commons,* and to ask me if I would go. *Will* you go with me, as before? If so, will you take two stalls as soon as may be? . . . I *must* tell you an answer lately given in an examination to a schoolmaster friend of mine.

'*Q.*—What was the Salic Law?

'*A.*—It was a law that *every woman* should have a male child before she died.

'I am delighted to see that the Dramatic Students are going to do *Love's Labour Lost* in June next. . . .'

'1 Hervey Road,
'Cambridge, *Thursday, Dec.* 2.

'I am very glad that the *Woman Killed with Kindness* is finally settled. It is *crude,* and often too *short* in the scenes for the amount of action contained in them, but it ought to be capable of being made very interesting, and marvellously pathetic. Lamb called Heywood a "Prose Shakspeare." I think (to borrow what James Smith said of Crabbe), he might be more justly called a "Shakspeare in worsted stockings."'

To Mrs. Gelderd Somervell.

'*Dec.* 29, 1886.

'Have you read and mastered that noble new poem *Locksley Hall, Sixty Years After* by the Laureate? It is one of the most touching things he ever did—and much of it, I have the best reasons for knowing, was written in the first shock of the news of the death of his son Lionel. . . .

'I think "the Angelus" very charming, though I can't quite get over the words "ere I was dead." Where is the gentleman supposed to be at the moment of uttering that remark? at C in Alt, or de profundis, or in some neutral territory?'

To Mr. Dykes Campbell.

'*May* 17, 1887.

'. . . Lose *no* time in getting Prof. Brandl's new book on Coleridge, translated by Lady Eastlake. It is a perfectly wonderful book for a foreigner to have written. It has some little blemishes, and odd literalisms here and there, as was inevitable, but taken altogether it is incomparably the best *life* of Coleridge, and commentary on his poems, yet written. He anticipates me (alas!) in one or two things I have said in a little Paper you will find in the next Number of *Macmillan.*'

To the Same.

'Callander House,
'Clifton, *Wednesday, Sept.* 21, 1887.

'. . . Come to *Bristol,* get into a cab—and tell the cabman "Callander House, Clifton Hill." If he does not know it—tell him it is opposite Clifton Parish Church. If he still hesitates, tell him that Shakespeare speaks of "plain as way to Parish Church"—and ask him where on earth he was educated. But I think your last detail will satisfy him.

'I have to thank you for *two* books. What a "snapper-up of unconsidered trifles you are," and how boldly you practise your skill under the very nose of a Sotheby, or a Wilkinson! I only hope I shan't be sent for some day, *to bail you out.* I am on the point of getting copies of the Williams letters, etc., by a quite different channel, which I will wait to tell you, face to face.—Yours ever, Alfred Ainger.'

To the Same.

'*July* 25, 1888.

'I never in my life heard such a set of attempts at after-dinner speaking as at the Mayor's luncheon. As was once before said of a like occasion, there was "every luxury except the letter H."

'Do you know the *Mirror* in forty-eight volumes? I suppose it could easily be got hold of somewhere—short of the Museum, for "that way madness lies."'

To the Same.

'Richmond House,
'Clifton Hill, *Thursday, Aug.* 30, 1888.

'My dear Campbell,—I have very nearly tried poetry on you, in my scorn, and began two odes,—one opening thus:

'A Person of Tillington Terrace
Refused to accept of some "Sherris";

and the other:

'A Pitiful person of Hastings
Wouldn't hear of a few claret tastings,
Unless, if you please,
He contributed fees!
And hence these poetical bastings.

'But the Muse declines even to attend upon any such miserable hair-splittings—so please let us hear no more on the theme. Meantime, if you love me, send me any scraps of information

about the Lyrical Ballads and their earliest reception by the ignorant world.

'Excuse these hasty lines. You know what the week is, when one has not only to pack, but to leave a house behind one in something like the order in which one received it.

'From Saturday next I shall be at Lord Halsbury's till Wednesday probably. ("I remember dining with him once, Gentlemen, there was only us two, but everything as grand as if twenty were expected. The Great Seal guarded by a man in armour, with a drawn sword and silk stockings, which is continually done, Gentlemen, night and day." See your favourite author—next to Coleridge). . . . Ever yours, ALFRED AINGER.

TO THE SAME.

'TULLIBELTON, BANKFOOT,
'PERTH, *Sunday, Sept.* 9, 1888.

'. . . In one of the letters of Wordsworth, Lamb tells him he is quite wrong to wish that a definite profession, etc., had been assigned to the venerable mariner. How curiously narrow and limited Wordsworth was in his estimate of other men's work! A more crude and incomplete account of the merits and defects of Coleridge's poem can hardly be imagined! By the way read (if you have not seen it) Sidney Colvin's article on some new Keats letters in the August *Macmillan*. There is one most interesting bit, in which Keats tells of meeting Coleridge and Green in one of the Highgate Lanes.

'Coleridge's own version of the same interview occurs in the *Table Talk*, as you will remember. . . .'

To Mrs. SMITH, at Christmas time, in his first year at Bristol.

'PROSPECT HOUSE,
'CLIFTON HILL, BRISTOL, *Christmas* 1888.

'MY DEAR FRIEND,—The above address will strike you as somewhat unfamiliar, and will at the same time prepare you for an entirely different style of composition from that frivolous one to which you have been for so many years accustomed at this season. It cannot be expected that a Canon *in Residence* should deal in such ephemeral and flippant discourse as he is unfortunately liable to at other times. For though a Canon cannot always be preaching, and is sometimes a Canon "*off* the Cushion" (as Willie remarks, who is always so full of his billiard slang), yet "noblesse oblige," and a little dignity is always becoming. Still, there's "a deal of

human nature in a man" according to Artemus Ward—even in a Dignitary of the Church—and if he should in any way offend by a lapse or two into levity, he asks pardon of Convocation and the Bench of Bishops. Let us be serious!

'I seem to see you, as of old, keeping up the good old Christmas customs. William with his grandfatherly cares growing thick upon him; Lillie, with "news of all nations lumbering at her back," as Cowper says of the postman; and *James* (no longer *Jim* after passing the awful Theological Special), propounding very minute metaphysical problems that rivet you all with amusement and gratitude. "In my mind's eye, Horatio," I see it all from my city by the West. Let us try, even without the phonograph, to reproduce some scraps of the Westwood House conversation, for the delight and improvement of posterity. . . .

'*James.* By the way, Papa, may I correct you in one mistake (a natural one, I admit) that you made in reading the second lesson in Church a few Sundays ago. The passage was that of the blind man who had received his sight. He remarks, you will remember, that he sees "men, as trees, walking." *You* read it "I see men, as *trustees* walking," misled by the abbreviation (trees) common in legal documents. May I suggest that you take an early opportunity of returning to the authorised version?

'*W. Smith.* Thank you, my son. The mistake, in *my* profession, was, as you say, natural. Moreover I regret to say that I have too often known "men who were trustees" walking (over to foreign parts), and the "Settikies" (see *Spectator*) left lamenting. At the same time I should recommend you on the whole not to criticise your parent's reading, otherwise our *relations* may be becoming strained (as the Grand Inquisitor said when he put his second cousin on the Rack). (Sensation).

'*Lily.* Talking of riddles, my own turn being artistic, I am anxious to propound the following, which is beautifully simple. Don't all guess at once. "When is an artist *not* an artist."

'*Mary* (flippantly, again). "When it's *a-jar*" (groans and disturbance).

'*Everybody else.* When he's a—; When he's a— When he's a— can't think! Give it up!

'*Lily* (severely). I asked you "When is an artist *not* an artist?" And I reply "Nine times out of ten."

'*Mamma.* I think that at this charitable Christmas season, my dear Lily, it would be better not to be cynical and scornful, even at the expense of the Exhibitors at the Royal Academy!

'*Lily.* Oh! Mamma, isn't that rather straining at a gnat? Talking of straining at a gnat, I heard a rather good story when we were abroad. Tom, was it in the Crater of Vesuvius, or at the bottom of the Blue Goat Gulch in West Carolina? A rather pious and particular lady who had lost all her teeth, consulted her favourite clergyman as to whether it was *consistent with Christian simplicity* to have a set of false ones. "Well, Madam," he replied, "no doubt you could *swallow the camel* better *without them.*"

'*Katie.* Seymour, will you pull a cracker with me?

'*Mr. Knyvett.* I am afraid I must forgo the pleasure, Katie. I cannot sanction the presence of gunpowder in an apartment not constructed for the purpose, according to the Act—Twenty-fifth of Victoria, chapter thirty-nine. The brother-in-law relents, but the Inspector of Factories is *fixed.*

'*Mrs. Smith.* I am sure, my dear children, that this example of duty and conscientious attention to official instructions will bear fruit among you all, during the year that is before us.'

'SEASONABLE LINES BY A CYNIC.

'"What does little Birdie say
On the Card on Christmas Day?"
Birdie says "I think it hard
At this joyfullest of times
To be caged by Marcus Ward,
And linked to idiotic rhymes.
Were I loose, and on a tree,
Making my own melody,
I would sing so sweet and clear
To you, and all whom I hold dear,
And then I should not (Bird ill-starred),
Look foolish on a Christmas Card!"'

To Mr. Dykes Campbell.

'*Feb.* 4, 1889.

'Your note, in spite of all previous fore-warnings, came on me with a painful surprise. For I had come to fancy that you were content to drift along for the present—and that the tide was keeping indefinitely off London, and not carrying you down Channel. I have no doubt that you are acting wisely, and for the best—but it is a great blow to your London friends, and not least to *me,* who will miss you terribly. I hardly like indeed

to dwell upon it. But you will be *now and then* in London, I feel sure, and we must "gather up the fragments"—one of the widest and most precious lessons of Holy Writ, I often think. . . .

'What a night of Rude Boreas and renewed Winter it has turned out,—I came home in a storm of wind and snow, like a shepherd on a Christmas card.'

In the spring of this year, 1889, Canon Ainger made a move that added greatly to his comfort. His little home had proved too cramped, the more so that he liked to entertain guests, especially the Walter Evanses who were now constantly with him. He therefore resolved to change his quarters, and eventually took the neighbouring 'Glade,' a roomy house just below Upper Terrace. Almost his first letter from this new abode was written to his old friend, Mowbray Donne, whose father, William Bodham Donne, was so intimate with Edward FitzGerald.

To Mr. Mowbray Donne.

'2 Upper Terrace,
'Hampstead, *Friday, April* 12, 1889.

'My dear Mowbray,—You are one of those men whose knowledge of literature, and of other things better than literature, makes his approval of anything I do singularly gratifying to me—and I am greatly pleased that you found something to interest you in my lecture. I know the ladies present mostly liked it; but (bless their hearts) they know less about *humour* than about most things, and the expression of a male verdict is to me more valuable—(Don't shew this to Mrs. Donne!)

'If I had not known before that you had the "root of the matter" in you, I should discover it from your remark on the *Ingoldsby Legends,* with which I entirely agree. Indeed, I am vexed with myself now that it never occurred to me to instance that work as a specimen of a particular sort of bastard humour. I believe with you that its influence has been wholly bad—and this apart from the fact that it is, *au fond,* vulgar and irreverent.

'Your wife will have told you that we are moving house (only "42 inches farther from town")—and where we shall still look for those visits from our friends, whether on Boxing Day or any other National or Private Festival, which it shall ever be our study to deserve.—Our best regards; ever yours,

'Alfred Ainger.'

To Mr. Dykes Campbell, who had just settled at St. Leonard's.

'The Glade,
'Branch Hill, Hampstead, *June* 4, 1889.

'My dear Campbell,—It was a real pleasure to see your handwriting again. I could have wished, however, that you had shown a less indecent precipitance in having your notepaper *stamped* with your new address, thereby crowing over your poor friend whose "gaiter-buttons" are not to that degree perfect. But the Herald's College shall turn *me* out some Paper with a "Headline" *soon*; and then your hour of triumph will be gone! In the matter of Posts and Postmen we are lucky in being on the same Beat as we were before, so that our letters addressed to the old house are brought naturally by the old men. We are by this time very fairly settled, and are delighted with the size and spaciousness and accommodation such as we have never known in our lives before. Is there any chance of your being in town again this month? We could give you a bed at any time. And it *would* save (to put it on no higher ground) so much description—so much "gilding the western hemisphere," as Mr. Puff says in the *Critic*. By the way, I heard the other day of a young Army Examination Candidate (in the Modern Languages Paper), who translated the Eastern Hemisphere "Le Demi-monde Oriental"—which is curiously literal. But this is a digression. Our household happiness is still marred by the absence of my elder niece, Maggie. Our kind friends, the Walter Evanses, of Darley *Abbey*, have been in town for three weeks at the Burlington Hotel, Mrs. Evans in daily attendance on the dying bed of her sister, Lady Evans of Allestree—and Maggie is so useful and such a comfort to them that we cannot find it in our hearts to have her home, until the end comes, which may be *any* day or hour. Sir W. Evans's house is in the St. James' Park neighbourhood, hard by—and Mrs. Evans is there almost all day, and Ada and I go into town constantly and make company for poor Walter Evans. But *any* day, as I have said, all may be over, and we shall be all three at home again, and glad to see our friends as usual. The weather is superb and the glade (literally a glade—no deception!) on which we look from our Drawing-room windows is really delightful. We could act *As You Like It* in it (with two property Deer and a Clown).

'You see I am getting frankly egotistical, so I go on to tell you

that I am much better than I have been all spring. The warm weather always sets me up in a wonderful way; but alas! our days in Hampstead for this summer are *numbering*—for on July 1, I am due as usual in Bristol—and this year, I would fain have had another month in Hampstead.

'Yes—the great Knight's great work (I may call it *great*)—three volumes, stout extra octavo (price 45s.), has reached me; and I wish it had not! Not that I don't want to have it, but as I hope to get it by and by for Review, I might have saved 45s. which would have bought me some new art fire-irons and a chair or two for my new house. Moreover, I rather think Knight will get rather abused by some subscribers to his edition of the *Poems*, who indeed knew that they were in for a single-volumed (one-horse) memoir at the end, but were hardly prepared to have three volumes thrust upon them—literally "*Greatness*" thrust upon them!

'The book is "without form" though by no means "void.". . . Yet (malice apart—and the 45s.) there is much in the book that one likes to have, and notably Dorothy's Journals. Those at Alfoxden made me sigh to be there again with another Lake-Poet-Fanatic whom I know, by my side.

'. . . And now I am fresher to express some interest in you and yours—to say how glad I am for every reason (save my own loss), that you are in such a fine and healthy retreat, to which I hope Mrs. Campbell will by and by supply the best of testimonials by getting quite well again, for the sake of her husband and her many other friends. But beware that *widow*! For you can see through a "window," as the boy said, but you can't see through . . . Ever yours, ALFRED AINGER.'

TO THE SAME.

'*Autumn*, 1889.

'I am glad to hear of all your "finds," and shall look out for you in this week's *Athenæum*; you shall shew me the Bowles some day. I have never agreed with you, as you know, about his Sonnets. They must have come to many in that arid age (as they came to S.T.C.) like water-cresses to a sailor after a sea-voyage. . . . I had a prosperous journey (though melancholy) on Wednesday, and was at Charing Cross in ample time. The Glasgow Club Dinner was very pleasant—for Jack and Craik, and J. J. Stevenson and myself were all in a group; and all in close touch with the Chairman. The amateur Bagpipist performed during the evening—and "Man! it was *not* juist Heeven!"'

To the Same.

'33 Royal York Crescent,
'Clifton, Bristol, *Dec.* 12, 1889.

'. . . I am in "full song" as usual, not only preaching a good deal, which is regular Canon's work, but presiding at meetings, and giving away prizes, and keeping myself amazingly *en évidence*, which, to a modest man like me, is distressing. Your *Athenæum* Paper on the *Englishman's Magazine* and the *Reflector* was most interesting. I wonder if it will have the effect of bringing to light the latter extinct Dodo. From the nature of the case, it must be rare. For who would preserve three odd numbers of a Periodical that had failed? Still, wonders never cease. I am deeply distressed at this news of Browning. I have thought him looking of late, when I have seen him at the Athenæum, so pale and thin and *old*, that it is alarming to hear of Bronchitis having got hold of him. Wonderful man, how beautiful and fresh, and even intelligible are the extracts from his new volume given in the *Times* of to-day! And old Tennyson follows suit on Saturday next. Wonderful old men! How strange that they should once more be coming out at Christmas, like the waits. Do you remember Sambourne's Drawing that I have got—of the two, with Swinburne singing in the snow?

'I have chosen a Shakespeare subject after all for my Royal Institution Lectures. I was obliged (the time being so short) to take a subject of which I knew something and had thought something beforehand—for time is too cut up here by endless calls upon it. The "Three Stages of Shakespeare's Art," I have called it. The early, middle, and later plays, of course meant. I have a good many MSS. Shakespeare papers by me, and I shall perhaps publish them before long, with these new ones—if they please me when finished. Write soon and illumine our apartments with some electricity from the Southern Latitudes. "Flame," like Ariel, "distinctly."

'Did you ever hear the following? some people I know declared it happened to *them* once. Sitting in the pit of a Provincial Theatre during the last Act of a great Shakespearian Tragedy, an old lady, with tears coursing down her cheeks turns to her next neighbour and says, "Eh mister! but them Amlits had a deal o' trouble in their family!" It sounds to me too good to be *new*. If you have not heard it before I shall hand it over to

du Maurier.—Best regards to Mrs. Campbell and yourself from us all. Ever yours, 'ALFRED AINGER.'

To MRS. SMITH.

'33 ROYAL YORK CRESCENT,
'CLIFTON, BRISTOL, *Christmas* 1889.

'"Here we are again!"—(*Christmas Clown.*)

'"Please, Mr. Hook, Mamma's compliments, and will you be *funny*?"
—(*Traditional Anecdote.*)

'"It is ill jesting with an aching heart!"—(*Serjeant Buzfuz.*)

'Ah! my dear Friend, the truth of the last melancholy quotation comes sadly home to me! For indeed I am *colded*—an interim Dividend of the Influenza to come—A Hair of the Dog that is *going* to bite me—and as my Dean is 90 and my only resident brother Canon, Archdeacon Norris, is disabled with a sprained arm, I am indeed in a poor way—for the whole weight of the interests of this great Cathedral rests on my shoulders. I am indeed depressed. I went to a Medical man here, who does not know me by sight, and detailed my sad case. —"Oh!" he said, "you want *rousing*—AMUSING—taking *out of* YOURSELF. I am told that Canon Ainger writes the most *amusing* letters (especially at Christmas time)—go and see him!"

'"Alas!" I cried, "I *am* that unhappy Being"—and immediately disappeared in Blue Flame—kindly provided by the Blue Devils—(*N.B.*) this is the first appearance of this anecdote in Literature. So, once more, dear Friend, accept the will for the deed this time. I am sending you enclosed a little Paper of mine lately contributed to the *Bazaar News*, at Glasgow University. They have been having a gigantic Bazaar to help to endow a "Union," such as they have at Oxford and Cambridge, for the poor Glasgow Students. I am an unworthy Hon. LL.D. of that University, and they asked me to write something for them—so make Smith read it aloud to you over the Christmas fire. It is all perfectly *true*; I have a copy of the funny little Romance in my own possession. The Bazaar is an enormous thing. They took £6000 the first day, and hope to clear £10,000, altogether.'

. . . . . .

'Oh! such weather again—wet and dull and warm, and wholly un-Christmaslike—

"Now Slave, joke on pain of instant death"—

'Let me look around me—Ha! Tennyson's new Volume, and some charming things in it. The Papers full of nothing but the Gas Strikes, and the Coal Strikes—and every other Strike. Ha! I have it!

"*One* Strike at least we all admire
The Laureate once more 'strikes the Lyre'!"

'It *is* nice to hear of that dear boy Jim beginning his new life under such favourable auspices. But I trust he will not (like so many young Curates) take to Vestments and other Ritualistic vanities. Send him the following anecdote (true) as an awful warning. A clergyman, fond of artistic church-furniture, lately gave out the following among the Notices for the week:—

'"I hereby give notice that on Sunday next the offertory will be collected in a new *Pair of Bags*, expressly worked for me by a lady of the Congregation!" The image suggested is indeed too terrible to be described save by the Pencil of the Artist.

'Well, dear old Friends, let me stop these frivolities and ribaldries, and wish one another all good and best things this Christmas time—I wish I was with you, for your northern air has more life in it than this soft western clime. "Dark and true and tender is the north," and I have always found it so, especially in Hallamshire.

'So best love to you all—and induce the Government (through William's well-known influence with the Conservative Party) to give me a Canonry north of the Trent.—Your fond but foolish,

'Alfred Ainger.'

The New Year opens with a letter to Mr. Dykes Campbell.

'The Glade,
'Branch Hill, *Jan.* 8, 1890.

'My dear Campbell,—You have been wonderfully good to me in the matter of writing, and your little note that I found awaiting me this afternoon on my return from a flying visit to Bristol (for Chapter purposes) interested me deeply—and I shall fasten that page about Browning's words concerning his Epilogue into my copy (a First Edition, I am glad to think) of *Asolando*.—The *Times* of that day—the 13th—was the only London Daily Paper that contained the news. I walked into George's shop on

my way down to the Cathedral in the afternoon, and found that even he had not heard it. I then said "Have you got the volume?"—and finding they had, I bought it and carried it off. Bain tells me that the whole of the Edition had passed out of Smith and Elder's hands by four o'clock on the afternoon of the 12th—that the fact was telegraphed out to Venice—and (as we know) he died at 10 P.M.—most touching of incidents. I have been reading the volume again all this evening. How full of imagination, poetry, picturesqueness and above all *Spiritual Wisdom* it is! a prodigious effort for a man of seventy-seven. I wish the tributary verse of his admirers since had been less terribly inadequate. Swinburne's I have not yet seen, but I thought young S.'s in the *Athenæum* the worst memorial verses I had ever read—until I came upon ——'s Sonnet in the *Pall Mall*, and then I felt that even the former must be content to "take a back seat." Well might the poet say:—

> "The glory is fled—and we've only glitter—
> The Gold is all spent—and we've only Brass—
> The Nightingale's dead—and the Tom-tits twitter—
> Alas! Alas!"

I've been a wanderer since I last wrote. When I left Bristol on Tuesday of last week, I went for three nights to Torquay, to some old friends. And the change, and the rest, and the appetising food did me much good—though I gave a Reading for a Local Charity in a great big room one afternoon. Among other things, I read "Owd Roa" out of Tennyson's new volume, and fetched the Torquay-ans very much. (By the way, did Torquemada come from that now fashionable Watering Place?) Then I came up to town on the Friday, preached twice on Sunday (once for Farrar at St. Margaret's) then next day to Bristol again for our meeting —and Dividends. The other day I came upon this French Idiom in Bellew. "Vie de Chanoine—Easy Life"—Ha! Ha! Ha!

'And now I have got to work out my lectures for the R. Institution, on which I have been musing much of late. When are you coming up to town? When are we to meet?—Ever yours, ALFRED AINGER.'

'The Glasgow Bazaar took £13,000 in their four days. Pretty well for a country where "Saxpence" is twice looked at before "lavished."'

To the Same.

'"Oh where, and O where—is my J. D. Campbell gone?"
'(*Old song, adapted.*)

"The Campbells are—going?"—(*Do. do.*)

'The Glade,
'Branch Hill, Hampstead, *Feb.* 5, 1890.

'My dear Campbell,—What has become of my old and valued correspondent?

'Perhaps he asks, what has become of *me*, and I am stricken dumb. But indeed, I have some shadow of excuse—not that I have been Influenzaed—I almost wish I had—for I should then have had, in an acute form, what I am sorry to say I have now had for three weeks in a chronic form. . . . I am thankful to say it has not yet affected my voice at all, so that I have not been seriously interfered with in my professional duties, though I am much pulled down and weakened.

'Write me one of your familiar and cheering letters, and bear with my stupidity for a while. ("We must," as Mrs. Quickly says, "bear with one another's *con*firmities")—and tell me if Mrs. Campbell is really better — and what you are both doing and thinking.

'How is Patmore? I daily read his little volume of Prose criticism, with most of which I am in *exceeding* great accord. I have, by the same token, just picked up the first Edition of his *New Eros*.—With best regards from us all, Yours ever,

'Alfred Ainger.'

To the Same.

'*February* 1890.

'. . . A thousand thanks for your own most kind wish to have me. But in any case I would not have come to you just yet, because I want to rest while I am away, and *with you* I should have grudged myself rest—for I should want to talk to you, *and be talked to by you*, all day long, and a great part of the night! I am no worse in my general health, but the catarrh does not abate.

'I wish you well through your visitation of the Innocents, and I hope you won't be tempted to try the Pied Piper over them, and deposit them in an adjacent cliff—leaving *yourself*, however, outside.'

To Mr. Horace Smith.

'The Glade,
'Branch Hill, Hampstead, *Feb.* 20, 1890.

'My dear Horace,— . . . I have just come back from delivering the second of three Lectures at the Royal Institution on "Shakespeare's Art—its Three Stages." All the world and his wife (chiefly the latter) were there — including your Brother Bencher, Master Clark. I may perhaps some day publish them in some form or other.

'. . . Last Sunday the coughing in Church was something terrible. I deeply regret that its effect upon myself was even worse, for "I pulled out my pencil and produced the following":

'THE PLAINT OF THE POOR PREACHER.

'(*Influenza-time*).

'Your pity not in vain we seek
Who serve beneath your parish steeples;
Our *own* coughs plague us all the week,
And on the Sunday—*other people's*.

'Ever your own,
'Alfred Ainger.'

To the Same.

My Dean at Bristol is *90* years old to-day. (Too long in bottle, and *going off*.) But the other day I dined with old V.C. Bacon just entered his *93rd* year! Dear old man! a sweet and beautiful old age.

'The Glade, Branch Hill,
'Hampstead, *March* 17, 1890.

'My dear Horace,—Very glad to get your "refresher"—though without the customary *fee*. I ought long since to have returned the *Wykehamist* which I now send along with this. The dear boy's verse and prose are both most promising. Of course, as you say, the criticism is crude enough; but it is the *bud*—dear boy—it is the bud. You have indeed reason to be proud of such "Three musketeers"—and I heartily congratulate you.

'By the way, tell Nowell I wrote a few lines the other night, during a sleepless bout, suggested by the title of Browning's last

volume and its appearing on the day Browning died; you may send them to him, if you like:—

'ASOLANDO.

'("From Asolare—to disport in the open air."—*Br.'s Preface.*)

'Never more keen than when his work was ending;
Never more brave!
How sad, how sweet, when life and death were blending,
This name he gave.
Like Hamlet: "Will you walk from out the air?"
"*Into my grave.*"'

'. . . I wish you had heard me preach yesterday on the "Weak Brother"; there was a passage on Sentiment beginning: "*Never sneer at Sentiment,*" which I think your soul would have approved.

'I applied a motto the other day happily. You know those *photographic* reproductions that are now, in illustrated newspapers and magazines, taking the place of the old wood-engravings—"The thoughts of men are widened by a Process—of the Sun's!"

(*N.B.*—These new methods are called *Processes* in the profession, as perhaps you may not know.)—Your own trifler,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

'No! I certainly never meant to raise the question of English Literature as against Greek and Roman. My object was to point out that the two chief objects of teaching English Literature at all, were to teach us to *enjoy* the great writers, not to know who their maiden aunts were, and where they were born; and secondly to know good literature from bad, when we come upon it in our own times.'

TO THE SAME.

'BRAMSHOTT CHASE,
'LIPHOOK, HANTS, *April* 16, 1890.

'MY DEAR HORACE,—I am indeed delighted, though not surprised, to hear about Nowell. But you will do well not to be over-much puffed up by this reflected glory: for remember that Shakespeare's father was no one particular (and even constantly in and out of the Bankruptcy Court), and as for Sir Isaac Newton, his parentage is at this moment so obscure to me, that, for all I know, he "growed." However, you are right to be proud of such boys, and, dear Horace, I beg humbly to enter into your pride, and to share it, as an old friend. (By the way, it will probably in the remote future be as having sent me to the Temple Church, that you will ultimately be famous!)

'It was the *Globe*, I think, who gave away my glory to our Austin. But he is quite out of it! In fact, there are really only *four* Alfreds—(the Saxon King, the Poet Laureate, Mr. Justice Wills, and myself)—who are *genuine*—all others being counterfeits. In calling my last two lines *weak*, they never said a truer thing. The fact is that, reading the news of the County Council's Decision in the *Times* on my way up to London from Bristol, a fortnight ago, I suddenly thought of a Parody on Cowper's "God made the country and man made the town"—which I altered to "God made the Heath: the L.C.C. the Park" out of which the sonnet grew; but as my view proved on the whole serious, I thought the line, as it stood, a trifle flippant—besides being "profane, too, o' my conscience"—so I watered it down, till the alcohol became imperceptible. But it don't matter. . . .

'. . . Come and dine on Grand Day, May 7th, and upset all the arrangements by sitting next me. *I* saw you in the *Illustrated London News*. Oh! what a wolf in sheep's clothing!—Your own,

'Alfred Ainger.'

'I am here till Friday—then Hampstead again.'

To Mr. Dykes Campbell.

'*April* 28, 1890.

'. . . Did you, I wonder, write that short notice of Dowden's Edition in the *Athenæum*? I could not quite agree in the harsh terms it applied to W. W. for not at once recognising the prodigious greatness of the *Ancient Mariner*. I am afraid that you and I, had we been alive at the time, would have probably been no less obtuse. *We have had a hundred years to profit by!* I have lately obtained the second edition of the *L.B.*, with Wordsworth's singular note—W. Bell Scott's copy, which he had parted with to Bain. I have got all three editions, and am highly pleased.

'I long to see you again, for I have much to talk about. Please report yourself early. I am still under the control of my ailment in the nose, which my friend Dr. Bowles of Folkestone has now charge of, and for which he is drenching me with quinine as my best chance. But "the summer is coming, my dear—the summer is coming." Who is a Dr. —— of the Browning Society? For he has written the silliest and most arrogant book I ever read about poor Browning. He says that until the Society put their name to him, he was the laughing-stock of the public, and the

scorn of the critics. Why, why, can they not let him alone? He also calls *In Memoriam* a *Magnum Opus*.

'Come, Campbell, come, our heath as yet
Is just a trifle chill and wet,
But when the wreath of May has blossomed,
We *will* make tracks for it, *you bet*!

'Ever yours,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

To THE SAME.

'RICHMOND HOUSE,
'CLIFTON HILL, BRISTOL, [*Summer,*] 1890.

'MY DEAR CAMPBELL,—Your last long and interesting letter deserved a speedier reply; but in truth it takes a long time for any news here to "accumulate" (like the cream on the surface of Mr. Cox's ha'porth of milk)—for this is the silly season, when every one is away, and the newspapers have not even any local gigantic gooseberries—though I *did* read the other day of the return of our old friend, the shower of Frogs! . . .

'I went up to London for one night on "urgent private affairs," as I told you I might; and was lucky enough to come in for a performance of *As You Like It*, far from being satisfactory all round, but having many points of interest. The wrestling was splendid. They had the finest *animal* for "Charles, the Duke's wrestler" that I ever saw, and yet, wonderful to relate, Mr. Drew, as Orlando, "threw him" most cleverly. I called in at the Athenæum, and at Bain's, but there was nothing much stirring. . . .

'Are you a strong admirer of the great Cardinal departed? Did you "collect" him in any form? Do you remember one of dear Thomas Hood's Picture Puns where he represents certain Tractarian doings at "*No.* 90, *Newman* Street, *Oxford* Street."

'Thank you for your occasional papers in the *Athenæum*; let us have some more of them. I wonder if you chanced to read Besant's onslaught in the last *Guardian* (but one) on the S.P.C.K. for "sweating" their authors. It was a splendid bit of invective, and will leave them badly off for an adequate reply, I think.' . . .

To MR. CAVE.

'RICHMOND HOUSE,
'CLIFTON HILL, *August* 28, 1890.

'MY DEAR DAN,— . . . I congratulate you on your first "Fish." For, as you are by this time well aware, a "Fish" is a salmon, and

all others are counterfeits. You don't mention his age or weight, and how long you were a-killing him. I see from a poem in this week's *Punch* that the irrepressible has been again taking up his Parable against Sport. But as "'Arry," the writer of the Poem, with justice remarks, it is not that 'Arrison so much loikes the poor grouse and salmon, but that he hates the "Bloomin' Toffs." . . .

'. . . Yes—I said a few words about Newman, for whose character and piety I had always great respect, though not so much for his logic. How strangely the same book affects different people! I must confess that the *Apologia* utterly failed to move me in the direction of Rome, for its very frankness showed the singularly superstitious *bias* of Newman's mind. Do you remember how he found some school-boy pictures in an old grammar of his, and thought they looked like a *Rosary*—that this made him think he was destined to join the true Church. "*Ex pede!*" I have lately been reading a number of our "All Saints'" Parish Magazine, and this has also failed to draw me in the direction of High Ritual. There is something to me almost appalling in the fact of a teacher returning again and again, as to a sin of *alarming danger*, to the practice of communicating at the mid-day Service instead of at one before breakfast. And this is Christianity after eighteen centuries! No, my Protestantism (in these respects at all events), does not become weaker with time, I find. I have been reading again Stanley's *Christian Institutions* since I have been here. They are most interesting reading—though one is not bound to accept all his deductions from his facts.'

To Mr. Smith of Brocco Bank, Sheffield.

'Richmond House,
'Clifton Hill, Bristol, *Summer* 1890.

'My dear Smith,—I found your welcome letter in the Canon's Vestry at the Cathedral this morning, and I hasten to answer it to the best of my ability.

'If you take my advice, you will not injure Elliot's fame by ranking him *too high*. He is not a Wordsworth, or a Burns, or anything like it; but none the less is he a *genuine* writer, in this respect that he is no "Echo," but a "Voice"—(to borrow Goethe's famous distinction). Of course he owes much to Wordsworth and Burns, and probably much also to Cowper, but every true poet owes much to his predecessors. But he is no copyist or imitator, but a genuine poetic mind working upon the scenery and

the characters, and the necessities, of his own countrymen and neighbourhood.

'His defects are the defects of not being an *artist*; I mean that his poetry, even at its best, is rarely perfect in *form*, but has poor lines, and poor thoughts (even), side by side with those that are most choice and charming. I am writing from memory—for I am without my library—but you will find that out of all his lyrics there are hardly more than three or four that would pass muster in an anthology of the best. Remember how *lovely* certain stanzas of "Hannah Ratcliffe" are, and how tender and pathetic; but, if I remember, the standard is not kept up throughout. One or two of the verses are commonplace. Then of course he wrote too much—or rather *published* too much, for his reputation. The half, in his case, would certainly have been "greater than the whole." But I know his fame may safely be left in your hands. It was you who first shewed me (what was new to me) that the Corn Law Rhymes were quite the *least* worthy part of the work he did, and that it is when he was able to forget social and political animosities that he found his truest strength.

'I wish your Society would ask me again to lecture, for it gives me a wholesome excuse for visiting Sheffield, a place and people I dearly love.

'I remain in Residence till the end of September, and if you could have come to me here from Saturday to Monday, any time *that month*, when I shall be a lonely Bachelor, I would give you a hearty welcome, and two Cathedral services, and a sermon, and *a good glass of wine* (but don't mention this last). I have been in Llangollen once. I went to visit the Theodore Martins at Brinty-silio—or some such name. Do you remember Sir Francis Head saying of some Welsh village—"Grdllemngr"—where he spent the night, that he slept "undisturbed by vowels."—With best love, ever, dear Smith, most yours, ALFRED AINGER.

'If you fail to see what I mean by *not being an artist*, think of Gray's *Elegy*, in which there is hardly a thought that rises above mediocrity, and yet which, by virtue of the poet's art, is, and will remain, one of the chiefest glories of English Poetry.'

To Mr. DU MAURIER.

'ATHENÆUM CLUB,
'PALL MALL, *Friday afternoon.*

'DEAR AND HONOURED POET, ARTIST, HUMOURIST, AND MAN!

—Might not something (in the hands of the right man) be made out of the following?—

'In consequence of the new fashion of ladies riding outside the omnibuses, a Gymnasium will shortly be opened at the West End where they may practise getting up, and getting down. *N.B.*—Each lady will bring her own conductor."—Your own,

MOMUS-CLERICUS,
'A real "merry cuss."'

TO THE SAME.

'RICHMOND HOUSE,
'CLIFTON HILL, BRISTOL, [*Summer,*] 1890.

'MY OWN DEAR ARTIST—AND NOVELIST OF THE FUTURE!—How grieved and ashamed I was to leave Hampstead, for three months' absence, without calling to wish you and yours good-bye, and take a tender leave! But I was so pressed for time when the end came, and I know you will be tolerant and full of forgiveness. My best love to you all.

'I cannot give a very good account of myself. I have placed myself under my friend Dr. Fox's care, and he is giving me tonic-pills and "Sprays" for my poor nose; but seems to think it is a matter of general health—and time. (I also want *hot, dry* weather, but it does not come.) He says most men between fifty and fifty-five years of age have a baddish time, and intimates that I must not "vary from the kindly race of men." How are *you*, and how are you off for jokes. None at all are grown here, I am afraid, but I am going to a few dinner parties this month, and will keep my ears open. By the way, yours is a pretty picture in this week's *Punch,* though somewhat unfair to the nobler sex. Surely you have got a new Poet in *Punch.* The lines this week on the Sunday Holiday are very fresh and touching, and not by a known hand that I can recognise.

'. . . The following translation by a recent undergraduate is not amiss:—

'"*Aulide te fama est vento retinente morari.*"

'"There is a report, Aulidus, that you are dying from retention of wind."

'. . . Write soon, and tell me I am forgiven, and that your heart is still with your little A. A.

'Have you let your house? and how is the young Advocate at Liverpool?'

To the Same.

'Richmond House,
'Clifton Hill, Bristol, *Aug.* 27, 1890.

'My dearest Artist,—It is long, too long, since I have heard from you, or of you, or written to you. I have just been chuckling over your drawings in this week's *Punch*; may I remark that "Euphemisms," not "Euphuisms" was the term you intended. We will discuss the distinction when next we meet on "Hampstead's breezy heath." By the way Guthrie's *Voces Populi* this week is wonderfully funny, and I have been screaming over it.

'And now, how are you, and *where* are you? At Whitby, I have some sort of idea, though I have not yet traced the fact in your contributions to "the most wonderful Paper in the world." . . . Resolve my doubts, as soon as may be.

'Can you recommend any books? . . . I have just reviewed for the *Guardian* the English Translation of Jusserand's *English Novel before Shakespeare*. What an excellent and readable book it is. I used to say of another French critic—

'Our English critics their dull wits keep straining,
When—Enter Taine!—and all is entertaining.

'But the epigram would be far truer if it could be adapted to Jusserand. For a taste—

'A Frenchman straying into English fields
Of letters, seldom has a *locus standi*.
But if there's one to whom objection yields,
'Tis *Jusserand*—he has the "*jus errandi*."

'Send this to him with my best respects. Write soon. Our dear love and regards to you all,—*Votre dévoué*, A. A.'

To Mr. Lathbury, then editor of *The Guardian*.

'The Glade,
'Branch Hill, Hampstead, *November* 3, 1890.

'Dear Mr. Lathbury,—Only too probably you have already assigned Walter Scott's *Diaries* to their appropriate reviewer. This is therefore merely an indication of one who would otherwise have much liked the task of reviewing them.

'I have seen with my own eyes the precious originals. When I was last in Edinburgh David Douglas showed me them, and I can never forget the pathetic sight of the handwriting becoming more than illegible, until it broke down altogether in that last entry at Naples (or was it Florence?).—Yours very sincerely,

'Alfred Ainger.'

To Mr. Dykes Campbell.

'The Glade,
'Branch Hill, Hampstead, *April* 6, 1891.

'My dear Campbell,—I have treated you very ungraciously, but alas! you are used to it by this time.

'If for nothing else, I should have thanked you for the epigram on Lord Byron—which made me *writhe* with laughter all round my dining-room when I read it about lunch-time. "Brutal," I dare say it is, but how funny! May you make many more such "finds" in the Crabb Robinson MSS., and confide them only to me, so that, like the gentleman who objected to the modernisation of Chaucer, you may keep them for yourself and "a few friends."

'I am alone, my girls are at Darley Abbey, and I am in the midst of a spring cleaning—the *very* uncertain glory of an April day.—Yours always, Alfred Ainger.'

To Mr. Edmund Gosse.

'The Glade,
'Branch Hill, Hampstead, *April* 8, 1891.

'My dear Gosse,—Very many thanks for the kind thought that sent me Mary Wilkins. I have already read two or three of her sketches, and they have a *rare* feeling and truth—notably the one of the two old sisters who were taken away to a charitable "home." Perfect, it seems to me, is the treatment here—and of a kind beyond Mrs. Gaskell even.

'I am going to give a Friday Evening Discourse at the Royal Institution on the 24th. I always remember how you came and comforted me last time, when I was a novice. I shall not feel so lonely this second time. By the way, I shall have to refer to a recent essay[1] of yours, I think—not wholly to agree with it, but not in any way that would displease you, I think.—Yours most truly, Alfred Ainger.'

To the Same.

'The Glade,
'Branch Hill, Hampstead, *April* 28, 1891.

'My dear Gosse,—Thanks for your most kind note. I am truly sorry to hear of the cause of your absence the other evening, and hope you are all right again.

[1] The essay was one on 'The Tyranny of the Novel,' afterwards included in Mr. Gosse's *Questions at Issue* (1893).

'Your cousin's version of what I said fills me, I confess, with amazement and despair! What I *hammered* at all evening was the difference between the *original* men and their *imitators*. I maintained that every fresh and original mind set going a whole school of copyists—and that the copyists, from the very nature of the case, were doomed to death sooner or later. I enumerated various *euphuisms*, as I called them, of this nature. I said there had been Carlyle euphuisms, Dickens, Macaulay euphuisms, in prose; and in poetry a Pope euphuism in past days, and in our own, Tennyson, Swinburne, Rossetti, etc., ditto. The "echoes" of these various men, I said, would not live—and I quoted Tennyson's own . . . fable of "The Flower and the Weed."

'I expressly, and in so many words, distinguished the originals from the copies—saying that the former were worthy, and the latter worthless: and lo and behold, one of my audience goes away and says that I swept all the *originals* away as *worthless*. I cannot conceive, unless I am already far gone in softening of the brain, how I could have so failed to make my meaning clear! If by any chance you hear any different versions of what I said, it would be a comfort to me to know the fact.

'Let me thank you again and again for Mary Wilkins—at her best she seems to me almost without a rival. Always, my dear Gosse, most truly yours. ALFRED AINGER.

'Among those writers whom I am reported to have "swept off the board" are men from whom I have learned much, and whom I deeply reverence—Patmore, Arnold, Miss Rossetti, etc. . . . Woe, woe, is me! Please show this to your cousin; for if I have so debauched the taste of a whole audience, I would fain recover one little *he*-lamb from the flock.'

To MR. DYKES CAMPBELL.

'*July* 30, 1891.

'OF literary news I have nothing particular. I have been keenly interested in L. Oliphant's *Life*. Did you ever know him? It is a strange story, but I think I see *keys* to it. Both he and his wife tried to get "better bread than is made of wheat"—as the Spanish proverb has it.

'"Puns I have not made many, nor *Punch* much" since we met. But the other day my neighbour, Mrs. Fox, was describing the voice of a very deep contralto we know. "It seems to come," she said, "from the very *bottom of her boots*." "Ah!" I said,

"I suppose you mean she throws a great deal of Sole into her singing." But she did not take it, so I send it on to you—a virgin jest.

'Best regards. Forgive me, and write soon again.—Yours ever, A. AINGER.'

To MR. DU MAURIER.

'RICHMOND HOUSE,
'CLIFTON HILL, BRISTOL, *August* 2, 1891.

'DEAR Novelist of the Season, and artist of all time!

'How are you? Are you going to keep your Bank Holiday alone? And have you got any new subjects for drawings, and are you going to break some new ground, and why have you never done the "Soldier and his Kennel," and *is* not Anstey Guthrie excellent in his two friends on their travels? This last instalment (with the American and his daughter) is surely the very finest and truest comedy. What a play he would write if he could only construct a good plot on a *genial* theme.

'This next fortnight I am going to get away a bit for a day or two at a time, for we close our Cathedral for cleaning—the "Priest-like task of pure ablution," as Keats calls it.

'Have you seen a book called a *Group of Noble Dames* by Hardy? . . . Oh, that men would beware of sensationalism and seeking for new and startling subjects and situations!

'I am rejoiced to hear of that great success of your venture. I await October, and the two handsome volumes—*Oct* (*ober*+*avo*), as we write in mathematics. How are the dear family—and is Sylvia once more in the bosom of that family? And when do you start for Whitby? What will be your address?

'Report yourselves to your lost and forlorn Canon.—Yours always and devotedly, ALFRED AINGER.

'. . . Many thanks for the Whitaker—next to my woollen over-waistcoat, my chief earthly comforter.'

To MR. EDMUND GOSSE.

'THE GLADE,
'BRANCH HILL, HAMPSTEAD, *December* 30, 1891.

'MY DEAR GOSSE,—I am truly ashamed of myself for not sooner putting on paper my sincere thanks for your pretty book, the

greater portion of which I have now read with great pleasure, the only drawback being that they (the essaylings) almost all leave off too soon. Like Mr. Squeers's boys and the milk and water, I had just drunk enough "to make me wish for more," when I found the chalice dashed from my lips. Many of them awakened pleasant memories. I had long ago discovered (of course through Wordsworth) the merits of Lady Winchelsea; then it was *John Buncle,* you remember, that Charles Lamb called a "healthy book," and the Scotch gentleman demurred, having heard the term previously applied to a climate or situation, but never *to a book.*

'Then the account of the Barnacle Tree in Gerard's *Herbal* recalled Hood's delightful fancy as to the origin of the myth. An old cobbler having pawned his gold-mounted spectacles to purchase his Christmas dinner, a rumour got about that "Barnacles produce geese." It is lovely, is it not?

'Altogether your book is not only (*pace* the Scotchman) "healthy," but lively and stimulating. Give us some more out of your eighteenth century stores. I know the quarry is inexhaustible.

'I am not writing in very high spirits, for death and illness are all around. May the coming year bring you all health and prosperity, my dear Gosse; and pray believe me, in spite of all my waywardness, yours most sincerely, ALFRED AINGER.'

To Mr. Dykes Campbell.

'ATHENÆUM CLUB,
'PALL MALL, S.W., *February* 10, 1892.

'DEAR CAMPBELL,— . . . You will be surprised to hear that my "Picture" (so the editor calls it) is to be in *Vanity Fair* this week. The editor wrote to advise me of the fact, and to ask if I would supply them with my age, and some other pathetic details. Thinking it better, in dealing with such people, to "take it *lying down*" rather than "fighting," I wrote civilly and supplied them with a few facts—such as the length of time I had been at the Temple (a touching and interesting *theme* which may be trusted to waken up the Prime Minister, or other dispensers of Patronage). But what will my "Picture" be like? I know I shall have yours and Mrs. Campbell's deep sympathy and good wishes for my recovery.

'I shall write again to-morrow, to send you two enclosures I want you to see.—Yours ever, ALFRED AINGER.

'*The* pudding was prepared for yesterday's dinner—and a solecism of deep enormity ensued. I had *two* helpings. It is the orange, I have discovered, that gives it its sublimity of distinction.'

To MR. HORACE SMITH.

'THE GLADE,
'BRANCH HILL, HAMPSTEAD, *March* 16, 1892.

'MY DEAREST HORACE,—Indeed I had heard nothing of your illness, or *of course* I should have written. How, indeed, *should* I have heard, unless my dear neighbour, Mrs. Charles, had informed me—and she did *not*. I do hope this blessed change of weather to-day ("Each moment sweeter than before"—Wordsworth! Ahem!) will speedily bring you round again—"solvitur acris hiems grata vice veris et Favoni," as your namesake once remarked—and

> '"When the wind blows, the fever will fall
> And up will go stomach, liver, and all."

'Nowell is a strange Oxonian, not even to know the Institutions of his own University. My term of office as Select Preacher[1] does not even begin till next October, so that there has been no "postponement" whatever. I then hold office for two years, during which time I shall probably have four or five turns (more "select" therefore than "numerous"—hence the name).

'I hope Nowell will do well in his coming exam., and that, as the Apostle (all but) said, "his 'Moderations' will be known unto all men." Give him my love when you write, and exhort him not to do discredit to my friendship, or outrage to my hopes.

'. . . Do you want any papers or books to read during your convalescence? Let me know, and I will send you some. I have made *no* jokes lately, or I would send *them*. Though I *did* make a happy quotation at Marlborough! The Head Master told me that a neighbouring gentleman, who had been touring in Switzerland, gave a lecture on the subject to the boys, illustrated with

[1] Ainger had this year been appointed as Select Preacher at Oxford.

magic lantern views. "Ah!" I said, "they used to do that in Juvenal's day, you remember—

'"... I demens, curre per Alpes
Ut pueris placeas."

'But the neatest thing I *ever* heard was said by a member of my cloth, Archdeacon Burney, the other day. He was at a meeting at Rochester, when a list of subscriptions was being read out: "Mr. ——: Fifty Pounds." "That's pretty good," he whispered to his neighbour, Archdeacon Cheetham (who told me the story). Cheetham, who knew the giver was excessively rich, murmured, "It ought to have been £500!" to which Burney instantly rejoined, "Ah! he forgot the *ought*!" It is perfect, is it not? "It makes me so *wild*," as Mr. Toole says, that I did not say it myself! "Pereant qui ante nos." ... Your affec^te.,

'Alfred Ainger.'

To the Same.

'Dyrham Lodge,
'Clifton Park, Bristol, *Sunday*, [*Summer* 1892].

'I leave here on Friday next.

'Residence up.

'My dear Horace,—A thousand thanks for the little book, and for your kind note. The verses are all charming to me—not less so because I remember many of them so well in their origin, and they bring back many of the sweetest and saddest days of my old life. I am so glad you included the "Little Curate." I only wished I had been allowed to appear oftener, for there must be many verses in your Portfolio, dating from college and Alrewas days concerning both you and me, and I would gladly have gone down to posterity, a fly in your amber. The word "fly" reminds me of our joint poem:

'"Will you walk into my curacy?
Said Haweis to A.A."

Where is that delightful lyric disappeared to?

'Your parodies are for the most part excellent. "Give that Brief to me"—*transcendent*. I had forgotten it, though I remember now your showing it to me when written. Really, they touch me deeply—even the humorous verses—because they stir such memories, and I find myself, like Mr. Augustus Moddle, standing gazing with tears in my eyes—"especially when it's anything of a comic nature!" Mr. Todgers said.

'... If I could forget for a moment that you were a *Bencher*

(and can order me at any time to immediate execution) I would explain that you are a hard body to please, or else I would ask for six months leave of absence, which might set me up in health.

'God bless you, dear Horace.—Ever your affec^te.,

'A. AINGER.

'Do you know this excellent French pun on Labby?

'"Quelle est 'la Vérité?'
La boue chère à six sous."'

To MR. DU MAURIER.

'DYRHAM LODGE,
'CLIFTON PARK, BRISTOL, *July* 22, 1892.

'MY DEAR KICKY,—Your kindly letter was a generous return for my scrimpy effusion. I hope you are all well, and that all promises well for the 12th—for the happy pair, I mean, not for the *un*happy Braces who will also be despatched in divers parts of the kingdom that morning! *Punch very* good again this week—Anstey Guthrie quite *transcendent*. What a power he has got of transcribing certain forms of seamy life, and what political good sense and acumen there is in his satire.

'Is there anything new in the book world? I wonder if you were at the last Literary Society Dinner? Some of the random newspapers are saying that if Gladstone comes into office our friend, the Chief, is to be Lord Chancellor, but I should doubt it.

'. . . I am going up to London, I expect, next week, for a night, to see my doctor, but I shall not reach so far north as Hampstead.

'Best love to you all.—Your own Canon in Residence, A. A.

'I have told Frank that no doubt the G.O.M. will try to bear his moderate majority with "Forty-two-d."'

To THE SAME.

'DYRHAM LODGE,
'CLIFTON PARK, *Feast of St. Lubbock*, 1892.

'SEA-SIDE BOOKSELLER'S SHOP.

'*Lady Visitor* (in search of something to read). "Have you Browning's Poems?"

'*Solemn Bookseller.* "No! Ma'am. None of us down here can understand him!"

'*Lady V.* "Have you Praed?"

'*S. Bookseller.* "Yes, ma'am. We tried that, but it was of no use!"

'I read of this as having actually happened. This may be doubted, but it is surely *ben trovato*.

'How good of you to flatter my vanity, both as a "Discourser" and as a *man* (for Canons after all are human!), by your report of the two Divine Ladies who called on you. But why leave me half unsatisfied by a too careless calligraphy? Is it Jewell or Jewett, or Jowett—or what other "J"? I wonder if it was yesterday week, July 24th, that they were here. I did preach that day on a theme which might fairly be described as Tolerance. (I suppose I may put them down for thirty copies of my next volume.)

'The very day after I came home, oddly enough, I received a sweet letter from your dear Arthur, dated from the Northern Circuit, telling me the date of the wedding, and most kindly reiterating the young folk's wish that I should be present, and I *quite* hope to manage it.

'We are having a quite lovely Bank Holiday, but I wish I was on "Hampstead's breezy Heath" with the artist of my choice. By the way, at Dr. Fox's last evening, I read in the *Magazine of Art* for April, or thereabouts, a sympathetic article on you with illustrations from P. T. You doubtless have seen it.

'My friend Ward, of Owens College, writes me that he has been much amused with *Charles Keene's Life*. I think I *must* buy it, in memory of the dear old Quixote.

'Write again (Type-writer will *do*). Why does not May take up that "admirable substitute for" the piano, and then (with a little practice) she might set down your most inspired utterances even as they flow in lava-like torrents from etc., etc.

'"So careful of the Type!—Oh yes."—TENNYSON.

'Your love-sick CANON.

'. . . Scene at dinner at Country Inn—favourite haunt of amateur artists. (Technicalities overheard in a lull of general conversation):—

'"Do you *wash*?
No, I *scratch*."'

TO THE SAME.

'DYRHAM LODGE,
'CLIFTON PARK, BRISTOL, *Sept. 7th*, 1892.

'DEAR AND DISTINGUISHED ARTIST!—How glad was I to see your writing, and dating from that place of places—Whitby. Would

that it were possible to join you there—but I am "tethered" here, like the "poor little ass, of an oppressed race," and may not break away from my allotted three acres (and no cow) until the 30th—the day you return. After that, even, my movements are uncertain, for I *must* be here for our quarterly Chapter meeting on October 4th and 5th.

'I am grieved about Gerald's new Firm. . . . But don't let him go on the stage—even if he were born to be a second "Albert Chevalier." It is an atmosphere of "Four 'alf" in which I feel he would not be happy. No! it is a delightful *amusement*—but a horrid *trade*!

'I am rejoiced to hear good news of the dear young couple. The other day I was with my old friend A——, and there I met an old friend, a Miss D—— (lately married to an old chap—"en secondes noces"), and found it was *her* old rooms in Craven (Hill? Gardens?), which I remember well, that Arthur and Sylvia have taken. Surely, this is a small world!

'*Punch* has been very good of late. Your drawing of the young doctor and his wife to-day is quite charming. Furniss's idea of the "New Cabinet," a few weeks ago, *masterly*. This evening I have asked a country clergyman near here and his daughter to come over and dine, and go to Hengler's Circus, where real Lions—three in hand—are driven harnessed round the arena. If this is not an intellectual treat, I have yet to learn what is!

'I have been expecting my dear friend Ward, of Owens College, to visit his aunt (also his mother-in-law) here this week, but he has again been laid up with gout—his old enemy.

'Write again soon—and on a *particularly* wet day, ask May and Gerald to add Postscripts.—Your ever devoted,

'Alfred Ainger.

'Best love and regards to the many-talented, many-charmed family.'

To Miss Sturge on the Death of her Sister.

'The Glade,
'Branch Hill, Hampstead, 1892.

'Dear Miss Sturge, . . . It is indeed a strange and startling reminder of the mysteries of God's government and discipline that we cannot fathom—that we can only bow the head and wait.

'You and yours will find your best comfort, I know, in

remembering how that life was spent: in ministry to the poor and to all who needed guidance and comfort; and such are surely blest—in their lives, and in what follows *this* life.

'. . . I should *very* much like to have the little sketch of your sister of which you speak. It is good always to know the "hidden life" of the reticent ones of the world, and to be assured that all real strength comes from the same One Source, after all. . . . No! thank God, death does not take away:—

> '"Thou takest not away, O Death!
> Thou strikest—absence perisheth.
> Indifference is no more;
> The future brightens on our sight;
> For on the past hath fallen a light
> That tempts us to adore."
>
> WORDSWORTH.

. . . . . .

'The departed are very near to us still when we share their best aims and endeavours and sympathies; there is no surer bond than this—for we are then fellow-labourers with them and with God.'

ALFRED AINGER AT THE AGE OF FIFTY.

From a photograph by Messrs. Elliott & Fry.

CHAPTER XI

LECTURER AND CRITIC

'"On their own merits modest men are dumb" (G. Colman). But I had very good audiences and they did not throw the chairs at me,' so Ainger wrote on the programme that he sent to a friend, of one of his lectures—the 'Three Stages of Shakespeare's Art'—given at the Royal Institution. The public need not be modest for him, and the words inscribed in his honour on the memorial window in Bristol Cathedral by no means overstate the truth. 'As Lecturer on great writers, he had few equals,' they run, 'face, voice, gesture and subtle humour each contributing to the charm of his interpretations.'

Between 1880 and 1892, Ainger lectured continually at Hampstead, at Streatham, at Edinburgh, at Glasgow, at Bristol, at Manchester, at Sheffield, at Newnham. It was in 1889 that he was first asked to do so at the Royal Institution. 'I have got the Blue Ribbon of literature,' he jubilantly told an acquaintance, and it was there that some of his best discourses were given. All who heard him came away with the picture of his spirit-like figure as he stood leaning up against the desk, now half-lost behind it, now dominating it with a dignity all his own, as if he had just come from the land of literature—'the land of poetry . . . in reality no man's land'—and were only there to represent it. They will recall the mobile face, the expressive hand, the swift and sudden gleam of satire, like the straight shooting of an arrow, the change again to tranquillity—all that he said enhanced by the readings that he gave from poet and prose-writer, which made his lectures so unique.

Sometimes he would stand as he spoke.

'None of us,' writes one of his Bristol audience, 'who had the privilege of being present on these occasions will ever forget him

as he . . . sat, sometimes easily in his chair, and "led our minds the roundabout." Nor shall we forget how in the intervals he used to prowl about the recessed platform, as one has seen happy restless creatures pace up and down a den, sublimely unconscious of the sightseers below. . . . He kept his audience in a delightful state of uncertainty as to what he was going to say next. It was obvious to all from the first moment, when he looked round the crowded room, that he was going to enjoy himself; and the audience instinctively knew, when they saw his humour, that he would not enjoy himself alone. Sometimes to those who could not help watching the hands of the inexorable clock, the last part of the lecture was almost spoiled by the overwhelming feeling that the delight must so soon come to an end. The hours were so short when this magician of the wonderful voice held us in a thrall.'[1]

Many of his lectures were published in his lifetime as articles. Of the twelve essays that he contributed to *Macmillan's Magazine*, many had first been heard in public, though their form was of necessity elaborated before they went to press. *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, *The Teaching of English Literature*, *Poetae Mediocres*, *Nether Stowey*, instances in point, possess a crispness and a literary finish not to be expected from the lectures which his own hand did not prepare for print. The first paper, *Books and their Uses*, signed 'Doubleday' (for Doubled A), was written when he was but twenty-two; the remaining eleven appeared between 1871 and 1896, when his contributions closed with an article upon his old friend, Alexander Macmillan, who died in that same year. They range over various ground: some are portraits of individuals, like those on Sir George Rose, or on Charles Mathews, the actor; in others he handles the drama, as in the one upon *The New Hamlet*, or his sketch of Charles Dickens's theatricals; but the greater number concern authors and literature—they are, as it were, pleasant strolls along its grass-paths, too definite to be called rambles, yet with nothing of the constitutional about them. And of these, the best are those that circle round Lamb and the Lake School of Poets. *Lamb's Letters*, *Nether Stowey*, *Coleridge's Ode to*

[1] *Canon Ainger: a Short Study*, by George Hare Leonard.

Wordsworth, which, as Canon Beeching says, throws new light upon the character of Coleridge—these are among the best things that came from his pen, whether for charm or insight, or for that kind of candid precision which always distinguished his judgments. And to these may be added *How I traced Charles Lamb in Hertfordshire*, given rather later and not published till after his death, in the *Cornhill Magazine*,[1] 'a narrative of adventure at Widford,' with 'more of the true Elia flavour about it than about many essays written more consciously upon that inimitable model.'

The lectures delivered at the Royal Institution were not prepared by him for publication. He delivered them from time to time, from 1889 onwards; two Friday evening discourses, 'True and False Humour in Literature,'[2] and 'Euphuism Past and Present,'[3] having been given before 1892, besides a course of three on the 'Three Stages of Shakespeare's Art.'[4]

'The two chief objects of teaching English literature at all are to teach us to enjoy the great writers, not to know who their maiden-aunts were . . . and to know good literature from bad when we come upon it in our own time.' These words, which occur in a letter already given, express Ainger's attitude towards books. Though he was as little impersonal in literature as in life, personalities were never first with him, and, unlike the lecturer of the modern school, he seldom dealt in biographical detail. His lectures and his essays—for to speak of him as lecturer and writer is all one—will stand not so much as contributions to knowledge, but as a record of his likes and dislikes, of his outlook upon men and books. Perhaps his most complete confession of faith as a critic is contained in a lecture which he gave on the Teaching of English Literature,[5] so complete that, to get his whole view, we cannot do better than quote a few pages from it, as they stand.

[1] May 1904.
[2] April 5th, 1889.
[3] April 24th, 1891.
[4] February 1890.
[5] Given at University College, Bristol, and published in *Macmillan's Magazine*, December 1889. Like the above-mentioned lectures, it is now included in the volume of *Lectures and Essays*, edited by the Rev. Canon Beeching, 1905.

'Would it be a worthless result of two or three years' study of the great realities, of which these are the counterfeits, to be able to detect the base coin, and at once nail it to the counter? I am well aware that fine taste is a very rare faculty indeed. "Taste," that admirable critic, the late Edward FitzGerald, used to say, "is the feminine of genius"; and, like its male companion, it must always be the heritage of the few. But there are degrees of it, and it may be developed by training, and though the best teaching in the world will fail to give some young persons a relish for Milton or Spenser, the average of failures need not be greater than in other and older-established subjects of instruction. . . . "Then after all," it may be retorted on me, "criticism *does* consist in picking holes and finding faults; and the result of all you have said, if accomplished, will be to limit our sources of innocent enjoyment, and to make us fastidious and one-sided." Nothing can be further from the truth. We may truly say of criticism, as was said of religion in Dr. Watts' hymn, that "It never was designed to make our pleasures less.' It is true that it purifies and elevates them, but it does not diminish them in the process; it incalculably widens them. It cuts off from our serious attention a vast amount of inferior writing; it teaches us to know the echo from the voice, the pale imitation from the real thing; but while it takes away with one hand it gives with the other, and gives far more than it takes away. Criticism is meant to make us fastidious—fastidious, that is, as to the quality of any particular kind of literature; but at the same time, if it is worth anything, it extends indefinitely the width of our sympathies and likings. It tells us not to admire unreal things and feeble imitations; but it also tells us how many things there are of first-rate excellence to which our eyes have been hitherto sealed. It tells us that though Shelley may be a greater poet than Longfellow, yet that an original Longfellow is worth any number of imitation Shelleys. It tells us that to affect to see no excellence in one kind of literature, because we see a great deal (or think we do) in some other more exalted kind; to wonder what on earth people ever admired in Pope because we see a great deal to admire in Tennyson; that this is a sign, not at all of the "higher criticism," but of a very low and poor criticism indeed; and any education in taste that has ended in diminishing the number of remarkable writers that we can derive pleasure from, is shown thereby to have been no true education, and to have missed its mark. . . . But there is a right and a wrong even in matters of taste, and while our

own taste is in the process of forming, it is of first-rate importance that we should be instructed upon authority "what we are to admire"; that we should at least learn to suspend our dislikes and our prejudices till we are in some measure entitled to have them. There are certain writers in our literature who have come to be called classics. What is a classic? A classic is, I suppose, a writer who has attained by the continuous verdict of successive generations of readers and critics, a certain rank which individual opinion is of no avail to disturb. Individual opinion no doubt very often does resent, openly or silently, the rank thus awarded to a writer. One of John Leech's youngsters, you may remember, confided to another youngster (his friend) that he considered even Shakespeare a much over-rated man. And if such a stretch of independent judgment as this may be rare, there are certainly many other authors, of the rank called classical, whose claims to such recognition our young men and women frankly question. Now I conceive that it is one of the best services the lecturer on English literature can render, to point out that in this, as in some other matters, the verdict of continuous generations is more likely to be right than that of the young man or woman, however brimming over with the higher culture. . . . A series of generations is wiser than any single generation. Of course no teacher of literature can make his students ultimately like any particular author. You can take a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink. You may lead your pupils to the refreshing streams of Wordsworth, and they may sip, and turn away. You may lead them to Crabbe, "Nature's sternest painter," and they may refuse even to moisten their lips. But the teacher may at least give his students a fair chance and opportunity to learn what it is in these writers that has made men admire and love them; he may warn them that any writer of individuality has a claim upon some patience, and some modesty, in those who approach him as reader and critic; that he cannot be judged, or understood, or loved, in an hour, or a day. The teacher may do good service by pointing out that if some of the noblest and profoundest thinkers of this century have confessed that they owe more wisdom and happiness to the poetry of Wordsworth than they can ever acknowledge, a young critic should never think that the last word on the subject is spoken when he has quoted the opening lines of the amusing parody in the "Rejected Addresses". . . .

'It is another of the privileges of a teacher of literature to make sure that his pupils take hold of every author *by the right*

end—that they do not begin with his inferior writings (for every author has best and worst), or with what is longest and apt to tire the young patience. But in any case—an author must be read. And as, while we lecture *upon* an author, we cannot ensure that he shall be read, I have often felt that to *read* a considerable portion of an author with a class—allowing his power or his pathos or his charm to grow and win upon us as we went along—is really almost the only certain way of ensuring that the writer shall ever produce the good we seek from him. I know the difficulties in the way: want of time, the chief. And then it looks so easy and so indolent! "Why should I send my daughter to a class to read a book?" asks the aggrieved parent. "She can do that at home. Why should I pay that professor to do what cannot cost him any trouble or preparation—any one can listen to a pupil reading a book!" Alas! Alas! how little people know! And what is the consequence? That, to repeat an illustration I used at the outset of my lecture, many a young student can write out a "Life of Sir John Suckling with Dates," which is not literature; and never come to the point of gaining pleasure from those two or three charming lyrics which he has left us, and of perceiving that the "Ballad of a Wedding," or the song, "Why so pale and wan, fond Lover?" are for real gaiety, humour, and vitality, worth nine-tenths of the machine-made rondeaux and triolets which make up the *vers de société* of to-day. And to understand this, is to have got so far towards understanding what literature is, and why certain writings have become classical and certain others have not. And, to repeat yet once more what I said at the beginning, the love of the text may then awaken an interest in the notes. But that process is not capable of being reversed. What is Sir John Suckling to me otherwise?

> 'If he be not fair to me—
> What care I how fair he be?

'. . . I have no intention of advocating the study of English literature as an amusement. I have tried this evening to show two things: (1) that happiness, or joy, as an end to be sought, is a wholly different—even a wholly opposite—thing to amusement; and (2) that the deep and profitable acquaintance with any great author can only result from a joint application of brain and heart that can never be easy, or consist with the mere instinct of killing time. It is not, let me say once more, by reading light literature—the Solomon Grundys among books that are born on a Monday

and die before their little week is out—that we learn to know good literature from bad.'

'*I am well aware that taste is a very rare faculty indeed*,' the words at the outset of this passage, sound the note of his personality. It was this 'very rare faculty,' rather than originality, which gave him a first place among men of letters, and through which he conveyed his literary message to his public. For he had one chief means at his disposal by which he carried out his precept—one distinguishing feature of his lectures which must be dwelt on before we enter more into their nature. This was his reading. Somebody once said of him that he quoted where others discussed, substituting apt interpretation for lengthy analysis. And it was true. His reading did not only reveal fresh truth by its beauty—the slightest inflection in his voice was often a moral epigram, a delicate application of some line he was reading to his audience. When he gave Chaucer's picture of the prosperous church-going ladies, quarrelling for precedence over pews, he appeared to evoke in their absurdity many petty human bickerings; and when he impersonated Edgar in *King Lear*, it seemed as if he were glorifying the whole of human loyalty. In the reading of *Lear*, perhaps of all other plays, his interpretative gifts were best summed up. To hear him in the storm scene was to feel the full impressiveness of poetic imagination. His Fool was Shakespeare's own Fool—the subtlest compound of shrewd insight and innocence, pathos and frolic, servility and impertinence, waywardness and dignity; now a prince, then a child, and now a will-o'-the-wisp. And the realisation of the other characters was on the same level. Lear's sorrow and dignity were part of the tumult of the universe, and when 'Poor Tom' was 'a'cold,' a shiver ran through Ainger's frail form, the tempest burst suddenly upon us on the heath, and we were set face to face with the elements and with elemental human passions.

There were, perhaps, few places which heard as much Shakespeare from him as did Hampstead. His lectures there on the great plays, to which his many pupils owed so much enlightenment, often consisted for the most part of reading interspersed

with comments. These comments were but fragments; they are only preserved in the stray note-books of those who heard them. Yet such as they are, they give some rough impression of his thought; and it seems worth while to subjoin them here—a natural sequel, however inadequate, to any memories of his reading.

'All true humour is based on breadth of observation; this is true humour because true life.'

'Shakespeare cared for man more than for incident, and revealed all the varied, unvarying qualities of humanity. . . . In Shakespeare the plot arises from the characters and could not arise without them. . . . No matter how repellent his plots, without intending it, and even without being conscious of it, Shakespeare seems to sweeten them and bring us more into love with human nature.

'Literature demanded a perfectly sane genius . . . and Shakespeare's genius was founded on moral sanity and moral sweetness. . . . Even his first attempt showed no sign of imitation; and his was "the power of going on and still to be." The stream, though it flows through well-ordered banks, yet as it flows, it brims. . . . His was the prodigality of quality rather than quantity. In his earlier work the food is sometimes too rich, and we cannot see the wood for the trees. . . . His finest mastery is the mastery over himself. As the incidents arise, his language calms into simplicity and strength. He shows us suffering and all the glory of charity which springs up like flowers about its feet.'

'We know Pope and Swift by their writings. Every novelist, too, now and then relapses on himself, but it is not so with the dramatist. . . .

'It has been thought that Jacques represents Shakespeare at a time when moral sentiment had become dimmer through contact with the world. I read a different moral and think that it was a healthy mood in which Shakespeare wrote the part. Jacques is not Shakespeare; and when in the play his melancholy is laughed at, Shakespeare is condemning cynicism, not allowing it. The little touch of conscience made Jacques sweet. . . .

'It is Shakespeare, not Pistol, who laughs at the fashions of the

day. And we, who have watched Shakespeare laugh at them, know him the better for it. . . .'

'If *Love's Labour's Lost* shows an excess of words, *Coriolanus* shows an excess of thought—depth of thought also. Its very obscurity comes from a plethora of thought.'

'*The Winter's Tale* stands by the side of the *Tempest* in sweetness and in greatness. There may be, and is, a difference in power when we compare it with the earlier plays, but most assuredly there is no falling off. . . . The tone is autumnal, real to feel if difficult to define. . . . *The Winter's Tale* and the *Tempest* rank as comedies, but they are so solemn that it seems profane not to rank them apart. In them we find still another "soul of goodness in things evil"—still distilled, but sweeter than before. Their effect is that of a sunny day after rain.'

There are two prominent characteristics in these and all his sayings about literature. The one is moderation, a quality doubtless implied by the word 'taste,' but Ainger's was a fine natural moderation, neither courting, nor shrinking from the obvious, which reminds us of the prose of a Cowper, or a Gray, rather than of any newer author.

To modern exaggerations he was an inveterate foe.

'Readers,' he says, 'of the literary reviews or journals of to-day cannot fail to be struck with a curious lack of moderation, or perhaps proportion, in the criticism of new books, especially works of imagination. . . . There is a homely proverb which should remind us that the standard is everything—the proverb which affirms that among the blind the one-eyed man is king. . . . It is the reverse of the precedent set up by Aesop's shepherd boy. He cried "Wolf! wolf!" until no one believed him. The critic I have in my eye calls out "Lamb! Lamb!" (or whatever is the proper antithesis to wolf) until he is met with a similar incredulity. . . . If the lowest praise you administer is "superlative," what praise is left for the giants of the art? If "supreme" and "consummate" and "exquisite" and the like, are sprinkled over the dish as from a pepper-caster, what is left to apply to Shakespeare and Spenser, Milton, Gray, Keats, Shelley.'[1]

[1] 'Poetae Mediocres,' *Macmillan's Magazine.*

This spiritual temperance of Ainger's often led him, in contempt of facile effectiveness, into some formality of expression, while his moral fastidiousness might to some have seemed almost excessive. And this brings us to the other essential quality of his judgment—his power of moral criticism, more prominent than aesthetic criticism in what he wrote or said. It was always the moral side of art and life that first attracted him, and it was the profound moral outlook which drew him most powerfully to the poet who for him summed up both life and art. 'It is owing to that surefooted step of his in things moral, that he never slips, even on that most dangerous ground; that he leaves us in the end satisfied'—he once said in a lecture on Shakespeare. Not that he thought art a moral matter, but be believed that it set up what Tolstoï calls 'a moral relation between itself and the public,' that it embodied a view of human existence often unconsciously formulated, and that, however impersonal, of its very nature it must reveal personality. He did not neglect beauty—none was keener than he to see and value it; but he regarded moral health as essential to it—not as the flower itself, but as the sun and light which fed the flower. 'Without profound ethical beauty there can be no permanent or enduring popularity for the serious drama.' So he wrote; and his lectures, his writing, his talk, bore witness to this belief, and to his consequent dislike of any theory of art for art's sake.

Such a strong bias was bound to have strong drawbacks. If it made his strength, it also made his limitations. His choice of friends in literature, as of those in real life, was founded upon personal likes or dislikes, which he did not seem able to help in the one case any more than in the other; and yet if we look more closely we shall find these feelings grounded upon a moral ground—we had almost said a moral prejudice—for such his literary sympathies and antipathies sometimes became. 'The hearty manner in which he' (Patmore) '"goes for" Percy Bysshe also struck me as being, even if wrong, yet wrong in the right direction. For the hideous Shelley-worship of the present day is one of the worst symptoms of wrong-headedness and wrong heartedness.' Thus he writes to Mr. Dykes Campbell,

and he seems to forget—deliberately—that Shelley worship is oftener founded on a love of beauty than on ethical instinct. Still more strongly does the same kind of injustice, and almost a dogmatist's injustice, appear in a letter that he wrote to Miss Flora Stevenson, after a lecture he had given in Edinburgh on George Eliot. His correspondent—who lived there—had been present, and wrote making some objection.

'My dear Friend' (he replied),—'Thanks for your note, and for your kind words about my lecture. Do you know, I am quite grateful that yours is the only demur that has yet reached me, on the subject of my estimate of George Eliot, for I positively feared that the whole audience would rise to hoot me, when I said what I did—so much is George Eliot the idol of the cultured classes in this city. I think I did not once apply the epithet "cynical" to her. I would not have done so, because she was too wise a woman to be cynical; but I do think that her way of regarding mankind generally—*de haut en bas*—is at the root of her failure as a humorist—and I wish you would re-read (say the *Scenes of Clerical Life*) by the light of this criticism, and tell me whether you do not better understand what I mean. She patronises everything in the world—even Christianity. The very fact that, holding the opinions we know her to have entertained towards Christian theology, she should have dealt with Christianity as she does in *Janet's Repentance* and *Adam Bede*, is the most perfect instance of this patronising. That she should make moral and pathetic capital out of an Institution she held to be based upon the idlest of fables, is to me, and always was, a revolting incident.

'One or two people after the lecture, in the tea-room, thanked me for "what I had said about George Eliot," so I had one or two sympathisers. . . .'

He appears to forget, almost wilfully, that George Eliot wrote as an artist, not as a preacher, and the shrewdness of his first remarks about her attitude to humanity stands out in enigmatic contrast with the set prejudice of the last.

Whatever the effect of Ainger's dislikes, his likes nearly always made delicate and reliable criticism. But occasionally, even here, his moral sense got in the way of his literary acumen and drew from him surprising statements. No one

has perhaps written in a strain more charming or more just of Tennyson, yet when he compared him with great poets, whom he liked less, or tried to prove to himself certain facts which he wished to believe, his praise was by no means infallible.

'Tennyson's diction' (so he writes after the poet's death) 'haunts us, and gladdens and purifies while it haunts. And this it is which makes him, with whatever other immense differences, so Shakespearian. His verse is so human, while also so bewitching and so haunting. As an artist in verbal expression he ranks with Shelley and Keats. Yet while for all the best verse of those poets our admiration never wanes, that admiration rarely warms into affection, and its appeal is therefore to the lesser number. It bewitches, but only now and again it moves. Keats's *Autumn*—

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness"—

is as Tennysonian perhaps as anything that a poet of marked individuality ever produced, and it *moves* us within its limits, but not within Tennyson's.'

. . . 'Sufficient now to note,' he continues later, 'that while he shared the divine Shakespearian sympathy with all classes, from highest to lowest, and "felt with king and peasant alike," he yet (like Shakespeare) recognised no virtue either in "classes" or "masses," save as they were made wise through justice, reverence, and self-denial. That Shakespeare's own attitude towards the "mob" was somewhat scornful, that there was a strong vein of the so-called aristocrat in that Warwickshire farmer's son, has often been inferred, and perhaps justly, so far as one may penetrate his dramatic disguise and read the real man. It was not in this, if it existed, that Tennyson followed him; but rather in the quality just before mentioned, of insight into the true source of national greatness, freedom based upon moral discipline.'

Do Tennyson's greatest lovers say that he was more of a democrat than Shakespeare, as here represented? As to Keats, Tennyson himself once said, 'If he had lived, he would have been the greatest of all.'

Yet no one, when not comparing one man with another, could write better and more justly about poets and poetry, or treat them with more steadfast enthusiasm. And his suggestions as to what makes enduring art, a theme on which he

liked to dwell, make no unfitting conclusion to his pronouncements upon Tennyson.

'In poetry,' he says, 'Horace has told us—and the cultivated sense of mankind has ratified his words—mediocrity is not admissible . . . for who shall estimate the enormous influence of its great poets in the education of a people, both as their teachers and as the imparters of intense and lofty and enduring delight? And if so, it must surely be of primary importance, in the interest of that education, that we keep our sense pure and unsophisticated, as to what is poetry and what is not. . . . The artificer who can make a jam-pot admirably, and a Grecian urn but poorly, will live, if he live at all, by the excellence of his jam-pots, and not by his urns. Poets must survive by their successes, not by their failures. It is excellence in its own kind that is a joy for ever, even when that kind is short of the highest. This, it would seem, is one of the fallacies that possess those who complain that contemporary verse is not appreciated. They plead with truth of some new volume of verse that it is noble in aim, earnest in spirit, and in metrical skill and a certain verbal ingenuity often admirable. Yet the volume in question is read once, in response to some enthusiastic review, but it somehow fails to delight; it is not quoted, or remembered, or re-read; treasured in that limited book-shelf that hangs, like that of Chaucer's scholar, at one's "bed-head." . . . How is this, indeed? What constitutes the vitality of verse? What is the essential reason why some verse lives and some dies? It is an answer, but no explanation, to reply that genius is inscrutable, intangible, coming like the wind we know not whence, and having issues we know not whither. . . . There may be tests for a thing, though the thing itself evades analysis. . . . It was not of poetry that Hamlet was thinking when he said in his nervous irritability that there is "nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." We have the great poets in our hands, or around us; and in seeking to know why they have taken a rank denied others, I think our chief test is the very fact of their survival—that is, that time has not withered them, nor custom staled them. Whatever the quality that has made them live is independent of time. Spenser is as delightful to us as to his contemporaries. Pope, though dealing habitually with people, incidents, quarrels, gossip of his generation, has lost for us no jot of his fascination. We cannot, of course, offer this precise quality as a test for the poetry of our

own day. We shall all be in our graves before a like probationary period is over. But there is a kindred test which may be applied by most of us during our lifetime. I used just now Keats's famous expression about a thing of beauty being a joy for ever. The line has been so vulgarised that we forget that it contains a very subtle criticism. "For ever" of course includes the lapse of ages in the world's history, but there is no reason why it should not include lapse of time in the individual's. If a thing is really good, really beautiful, it will travel with us through life, a "life's star," that never wanes or dwindles; or it will seem to grow to us more good, more beautiful, as we ourselves grow in real culture.'

And again let us hear him upon the critic of poetry and his functions.

'It is not grotesque mediocrity which seems likely nowadays to deceive the elect, or even the non-elect. If there is a counterfeit poetry now in circulation, it is of a wholly different mintage. Any one can detect and nail to the counter such spurious money as Macaulay denounced. The later coinages are far better imitations of the genuine thing. Many, indeed, are on the surface of them very like the real thing; the face is as bright, sometimes brighter, than 18-carat gold; the cutting of the die seems perfect, the impression skilfully taken, the milling unexceptionable. It is only when weighed in the hand by some one familiar with the genuine coin that its weight is felt to be deficient; only when struck against some strong, hard surface that its ring is perceived to be false.

'. . . One would have supposed that at such a period—when, to adapt the proverb of the wood and the trees, one can hardly see literature for the books—the critical standard would rise; that the critic would show himself more, not less, exacting, and would be more careful, in the interest of the reader, to emphasise the distinction between the excellent and the mediocre. Yet no one can read much of the current periodical criticism without noting that it is rather the opposite that is happening. While it is an obvious and undeniable fact that the manufacture of books, as distinguished from authorship, exists on an enormous scale, yet apparently the average critic becomes more easy to please, not less, than of old; as if he cried in sheer despair to the makers of books, "Well, if you can't rise to my standard, I must come down to yours"; and hardly six months pass without some

prose romance appearing, by some fresh writer, and being received with such a chorus of welcome and such hecatombs of praise, as would require some modification if applied to the masterpieces of Walter Scott—to *Old Mortality* or *The Heart of Midlothian*. Now, as I have said, no one wishes for a return of the criticism called slashing, but what I do think the intelligent reader often sighs for, is some criticism that may be called discriminating; and if the value of such in literature of whatever kind is great, it is surely greatest where the literature in question is poetry.'

He had scant belief in latter-day singers and was not inclined to treat them over hospitably. And this was not one of his personal prejudices, but part of his poetic creed —a part which no one has accounted for better than he himself.

'Is the thing said by the new poet in itself worth saying' (he asks)? 'Of much of the verse of the present day, this is a safe test. Much of it is written, apparently, for the sake of exhibiting a technical skill in wordbuilding, or the invention of new and curious metres. Here the form is everything, and the substance nothing. . . . A minor poet is not necessarily mediocre; and there is ample room for the former, and ample reason for us to value and be thankful for him. I am aware that a flavour of mediocrity has come to be associated with the word "minor." There is a story of a lady of fashion, who collected notabilities at her parties, introducing a bard of this description to a distinguished foreigner in these terms: "Herr Muller," she said, "allow me to introduce to you Mr. Shelley Smith, one of the most distinguished of our minor poets." The story adds that Mr. Shelley Smith was not pleased. . . . The best of the "minor" verse and the best of the "major" dwell side by side, differing from each other doubtless in glory, but stars for ever, and joys for ever, in the firmament of beauty with which God has encircled His world. . . . Such a practice (superlative praise) tends to confuse and spoil that moral sense, which, as well as an intellectual one, enters (I firmly believe) into our appreciation of the highest. When a new poet is hailed, within a week of his first appearance, as a new Shelley, should the epithet prove absurd, you may ask, "Well, what harm is done, beyond fluttering needlessly the æsthetic pulse of the reader, and causing the expenditure of a

few premature half-crowns?" Well the harm is that treason is done—not of course against the *Dii Majores* of verse, who sit apart, beside their nectar, careless of the critics—but treason against the poetic instinct and conscience of the general reader, who is tempted to rub his eyes and exclaim, "Is this first-rate poetry? Have I been deceived all my days in regarding the really great poets, on whom time has set his seal, as on a wholly different plane from these; as really great, enduring, vital, part and parcel of my life's experience—entering into the very faith, hope, love, strength, and joy of my intellectual and spiritual being?'

Enough has been said and quoted to show Alfred Ainger's views about art and literature, his attitude towards them, from the moral and æsthetic standpoints. We have said all when we say that he was an interpreter, not an originator, that although he had so much of the artistic temperament, he was not completely an artist. His moral sense interfered, and it too frequently induced him to confound ethics with art. But the moral sense has its place in criticism—a very important one—and wherever such a force is needed, there Ainger's judgment was perfect: simple, sober, yet fervent.

The same strength and the same weakness characterise his conception of life, and perhaps this is nowhere better exemplified than in his correspondence with Mr. Shorthouse about the *Little Schoolmaster Mark*, a book which excited Canon Ainger in a way that was by no means usual with him. Where he handles religion and its influence in the world, he always speaks words of wisdom; but where he handles art and its whole relation to religious faith, the moralist grows too strong for the artist. The correspondence began in 1883, soon after the little book was published.

'Hampstead, *November 23rd*, 1883.

'Dear Mr. Shorthouse,—I have wished ever since I read your beautiful story of the *Little Schoolmaster Mark*, to write and thank you for it. I am afraid you are too well used to this kind of unsolicited tribute, but I hope you will forgive my impertinence. Of course, like the rest of your readers, I have been interpreting the allegory (if allegory it is) in my own way and

according to my own dim guesses. But the reason perhaps why I have been specially interested in it from the clerical point of view, is that it seemed to me to support and justify a very favourite lesson of mine, which I have very often tried to instil from the Temple pulpit, that "if we try to treat religion as if it was one of the Fine Arts, we shall inevitably kill it in the process." I have used this very phrase more than once in the last few years, and when I came to the tragic end of your story and found the little schoolmaster (who can be no other than Religion or the Spirit of Holiness) dying under the world's too ingenious hands, I seemed to read in it a confirmation of my own teaching at various times.

'I wonder if I am anywhere near the truth. Possibly—and most likely—you had some other purpose in mind, of a very different scope. But I did take the great liberty of referring to your story in my last Sunday's sermon—and in these terms:—

'"When the Little Schoolmaster Mark is forced to take up his abode in the clever and polished and wicked world—the world liked *him* for his purity and unworldliness, for the world cannot choose but admire and revere. It sees what benefit religion brings, but it will not surrender itself to it—it will not gaze and gaze, and adore, till it assimilates itself to the Divine Ideal. It must needs have Religion for its playfellow, and its plaything, a new instrument for its inventiveness and resource.

'"Religion must take its share in the world's Saturnalia. But in the midst of it, the young child droops and falls—and there is a cry of *Look! Look! the child is dying!* And at once the play is stopped. And so the story ends."

'Most true vision of the end of all such endeavours!

'Religion must be above *us*, and greater than *us*, if it is to lift us higher. If we put it on our own level or patronise it—or play with it—it will die. And when it dies, corruption spreads. Society may linger yet for a while in the after-glow of its memory, but the end will not be far off.

'This may be—and probably is—quite beside the mark (no pun intended), but I hope that, if I have interpolated a moral, it is not one that you would wholly disagree with.

'I am very anxious to learn all the lessons of your wonderful story. Mrs. Macmillan has put me on the track of some records of Italian Comedy, which she tells me are illustrative of the latter part of your fable.

'Pray forgive me this intrusion. But in truth, I have not

been for very long so charmed as by this romance of yours, and I cannot hold my peace about it, without pain and grief.—Yours faithfully and gratefully, ALFRED AINGER.'

'LANSDOWNE,
'EDGBASTON, *Nov.* 25, 1883.

'DEAR MR. AINGER,—I am very grateful for your letter and for the expression of the interest you take in Little Mark. If success be ever attained by the writer of what we call fiction, it must be when men of culture perceive in his stories lessons and glimpses of truth such as they have discovered in life itself! For more than this who could wish to hope?

'With your interpretation I should be the last to quarrel. In fact, if words mean anything, it is what occurred. But is it all the truth? Can one instance, however typical, exhaust the whole of truth? May not something be said for the Prince's view of life? May not religion be conceived as a fine art—(life surely is, or would be, where circumstances allowed); where then can the line be drawn?—for we shall not dispute that religion is a part of life. Have religionists been so successful as to preclude all idea that there has been a mistake somewhere? Has not *Fanaticism* used your words, again and again, with baleful effect: "gaze and gaze, and adore," and are there not words somewhere about "the wisdom of the serpent" as well as about "the harmlessness of the dove"? May it not be a mission—as it is to show what *life may be*—to show what religion *might* be?—not as an outcast or alien from life's feast, but as the honoured and presiding guest. Is it because of such failures as the Prince's experiment that the problem is still unsolved?

I am glad to think of any work of real art, that opposite lessons may be read *into* it, though not perhaps *from* it: if it be a true glimpse of life it must bear different interpretations as life does. I should not be shocked to find the tale claimed as pessimistic—pessimism must be faced. I should be very glad if my little tale might serve as a peg for such discussion as would bring out more of your thoughts. Shall we *ever* have the pleasure of hearing them here?—With kindest regards from my wife, I am, yours very sincerely, J. HENRY SHORTHOUSE.'

'LANSDOWNE,
'EDGBASTON, *December* 3, 1883.

'MY DEAR MR. AINGER,—I have ventured to send you a copy of the *Little Schoolmaster Mark*, which I hope you will accept

in token of the pleasure we have always felt in the recollection of our introduction to you and of thanks for your last letter. I assure you that this letter has been the cause of much interesting discussion here, and has enabled me to see much clearer the meaning of my own tale. When I wrote it I had before my mind chiefly the study of contrast between the spiritual life and the worldly life, in its most attractive form.

'It is, however, the distinguishing advantage of fiction that the meaning is not limited to what was in the writer's mind at the time. I should *now* say that the story is the *relation of one of many failures to reconcile the artistic with the spiritual aspect of life.* This, I think, will not interfere with your interpretation, but will at the same time allow for extension of meaning.

'The Prince was not equal to the task, but who is? He had not only to keep his "Saturnalia" in order, but he was exposed to an unexpected difficulty—the effect of the Princess Isoline and disappointment (in her religious life) upon Mark. This he probably never dreamt of, yet was it not *this* that really killed Mark?

'I am very glad I stopped when I did. I heard a voice behind me saying, "You have written enough, stop there." Yours very sincerely,

'J. Henry Shorthouse.'

'Lansdowne,
'Edgbaston, *April* 27, 1884.

'My dear Mr. Ainger,— . . . I return the "interpretation" with many thanks. I am very pleased with the idea of false and true art; this will be helpful. The whole paper is very like one which dear Mrs. Russell Gurney sent us as soon as the tale appeared. I would copy it, but it is so like the one you have that it is hardly worth while. She says, "once I thought the whole was a scene in ManSoul, as Bunyan would call it, that Mark was the conscience or divinely-born spirit — the Prince the reasoning faculty—the Princess the earthborn Psyche allied to the outward, while the Signorina was the art-winged one, the counterpart of dear, subtle, humorous old Arlecchino. The ethereal clown, questioning with Mark concerning art-life "so wondrously," was he the human, sensuous perception? But *no*; the simple dignity and unity of the poem seems to fritter on (*sic*) such attempt to label.". . . .

'I am, Yours, etc., etc.,

'J. Henry Shorthouse.'

'*October* 1884.

'DEAR MR. SHORTHOUSE,—I want to tell you with as little delay as possible, with what delight and gratitude I have read the second part of *Little Mark*: you had prepared me, in a measure, for the line you were going to take, but I had little notion of the power and pathos that was in store for us. As you know, I have been for years trying to enforce kindred truths from the pulpit, and I can only wish that we could always be seconded so nobly and effectually by so-called "secular" writers and teachers. Oh, how my heart went with you when you denounced the foolish and pernicious practice of distinguishing between things "secular" and things "sacred"!

'What struck me as much as anything was the use made of the Signorina's devotion to the old Maestro, as shewing how art might minister to devotion and self-sacrifice, and so become *indeed* a hand-maid to religion. Was this use of the situation at all contemplated in the *first part* of the story—or was it a brilliant after-thought? I will not write more now, for (please God) we shall meet early in November and shall have much pleasant talk. I am coming to the end of my vacation, and am here staying a few days with a very dear and valued clergyman friend, Mr. Bather. With kindest remembrances to Mrs. Shorthouse, yours always, ALFRED AINGER.'

'When I came to the end of your story, my first thought was, "what a fine *drama* it would make." But I soon withdrew the remark—for that would be to make righteousness end only in art. Far better that we should read and ponder and grow by the process nearer to "the children—and the Christ."'

'LANSDOWNE,
'EDGBASTON, *October* 2, 1884.

'DEAR MR. AINGER,—Very many thanks for your most kind letter. We are delighted that you think the *second Part* successful. It was somewhat of a risk, but I am quite satisfied with the course I took. I never could have written the second part but for the conversations and suggestions which resulted from the first; and the fact that a story has grown gradually in the author's mind is, I think, of immense advantage every way.

'I think when the two parts are published together the tale will be seen to develop itself naturally. I hope you will allow me to send you one of the first copies.

'We need not say how much we are looking forward to your visit. . . . Yours very sincerely,

'J. HENRY SHORTHOUSE.

'*PS.*—The action and re-action of feeling on musical tone has long been a subject of interest to me. I am certain that some time a *Great Musical Tale* will be written by some one and will be a revelation to all of us.'

It is strange that throughout these letters Ainger seems to believe that he is in perfect agreement with Shorthouse. Both are, in truth, making for the same goal—the spiritualising of life; but they reach it, as it were, by inverted methods, for Shorthouse wants to turn religion into an art, while Ainger desires to turn all art into religion. Shorthouse was a mystic and a Platonist; Ainger was a sober English Protestant. Yet their minds suited well in intercourse—they liked to discuss the same themes; and their converse, whether held in London or at Edgbaston, where Ainger paid more than one visit, left stimulating memories behind it.

CHAPTER XII

AINGER'S HUMOUR

To Ainger's strong moral sense, his humour acted as a counterpoise. Or, rather, we should say that the one was part of the other. It is dangerous to generalise, yet it might almost be laid down that true humour, unlike wit, belongs to character—that it is a moral quality—or, at least, if it is to endure, that it must contain the moral element.

Alfred Ainger's humour was of the school of Charles Dickens—broad, warm, high-spirited. He himself has acknowledged his master and given us his own definitions both of wit and humour:

'Not, perhaps, till the next great master of humour shall have arisen, and in his turn fixed the humorous *form* for the generation or two that succeed him, will Dickens's countrymen be able to form a proximate idea of the rank he is finally to take in the roll of English Authors.

'. . . Wit, according to the definition commonly accepted, lies in the discovery of relations between words or ideas before unsuspected or unimagined; its pleasure lies in surprises . . . but the genius of at least one eminent contemporary of Dickens shows how any definition of the kind is subject to continuous modification. Thomas Hood was a great wit—in his own line without a rival—but his best wit merges into humour, transfused by his great gift of human kindness. Thackeray was feeling his way to a truer account of the matter when he said, "Shall we not call humour the union of love and wit?" In this combination of a swift and vivid intellectual apprehension, with the controlling sense of a human relationship with all the diverse creations of his fancy, consists the power of Charles Dickens. And in this regard, as a humorist, he takes higher rank than Thackeray. The latter does not stand on the same level as his characters; he looks down on them kindly, no doubt, and pityingly, but still from a higher elevation. The allegory which he suggested in the preface

to *Vanity Fair* was more candid than perhaps the writer knew. He looked on the men and women whose thoughts and actions developed under his hand, as puppets, and he thereby missed the sense, ever present with his brother-novelist, of a real human equality with them. He was capable of love for them, but it was the love of compassion rather than that of sympathy. . . . We have little doubt that, to use the words with which Lord Macaulay concluded his review of Byron, "after the closest scrutiny, there will still remain much that can only perish with the English language."'

Ainger's wit was no mere embroidery: it filled a definite rôle in his life. Spontaneous and mercurial though it was, he had a clear conception of what he meant to do with it. He hardly ever discussed general subjects, even when they were literary ones, and he usually avoided the topics of the day, or any threshing out of ideas. His talk consisted mainly of allusion, of anecdote, of quotation, elements that cannot exist, except in an atmosphere of humour; and his genius lay in their application, more than in original flights. 'His talk was rich and full' (to quote a Bristol friend), 'his silences full of inspiration. He knew exactly how to fill a pause with some dry comment, irresistibly piquant and droll.' By no means a gossip, yet he was very personal—and circumspect in his inquiries about people. These he made with a good deal of human interest, in which his natural precision played no small part. He was always put out by vagueness, whether of speech or impression, and it may have been this neat-mindedness which helped him to his taste for verbal quips. In this he was lucidly masculine, but he almost had a woman's need of pleasing and, when at his best, a feminine power of making the person he was talking to feel that he or she was the one being with whom he desired conversation. 'He who knew so well how to talk,' continues the same friend, 'was one of those brilliant listeners, who, by a certain sympathy, shown in every look and attitude, make men give fully of their best, or even surprise them into a better best than they had known themselves capable of until confronted by such eyes and such expectancy.'

One distinction was pre-eminently his. There are but few men of whom it can be said, as of him, that they are both good and witty—and in this he can be compared to his beloved Charles Lamb. He was fully aware of the danger his gifts brought with them. 'Wit,' he wrote, 'has a power of its own, as effective for the moment as argument. . . . It is comparatively easy to make a person or a cause ridiculous, when a solid refutation of them would not be possible.' And he laid his own warning to heart, for among the many sayings of Canon Ainger, we cannot recall one which is unkind. He was not without a fine elusive malice, but when he used it, it was the silver flash of the blade and not its sharpness that we remember, and the blade, as a rule, was not directed so much against individuals as against types, against persons who represented certain tendencies that were ridiculous in his eyes. To preach outside a pulpit bored him. As we know, he had no taste for discussion. But he often conveyed serious criticism of life and books in a whimsy, or an adage. He had been reading Le Gallienne's *Religion of a Literary Man*, published at the 'Bodley Head,' the sign-board of the latest modern authors.

> 'I read in a Fin-de-Siècle Bard
> And then I up and said—
> "O give us more of the godly heart
> And less of the Bodley Head."'

So, at a dull committee-meeting, he irrelevantly wrote on a slip of paper and passed it on to Mr. Gosse, who happened to be his neighbour. His dislikes were always effective, and deeper subjects than minor poets were hit off by his gift for *multum in parvo*. There was nothing to which he objected more strongly than latitudinarianism; and once, some time in the late seventies, when he took up a volume of sermons, *High Hopes*, by Congreve, from a friend's table: 'Ah, I see, *High Ropes*, by Blondin,' he said, and he put the book down. But the image evoked of the acrobat, then constantly before men's eyes, seemed to dispose of the work. Or there is the rhyme, perhaps the best known of his, which was made at the Macmillans' table, soon after the appearance

of Haweis's book, *Music and Morals*, and also of his first-born child:

'Little Baby Haweis,
Playing with your corals,
Pa will mind your music—
Who will mind your morals?

And again the four nonsense lines—a protest against the last thing out — which have not hitherto been generally recognised as his:

'There was an old person of Delhi,
Who couldn't read Crockett's "Cleg Kelly."
When they said, "It's the fashion,"
He replied in a passion
—"What then? so is Marie Corelli."'

A characteristic of his wit was his power over quotations, his quick adaptation of them to his needs. One day a friend had been describing Miss Fillunger's singing of Schubert's *Hirt auf den Felsen*, to Herr Mühlfeld's clarinet accompaniment. 'That sounds too much like what Lamb said of pineapple: "If it isn't a sin, it is like enough to sin to give a pause to a tender conscience."' This is one of many instances, too dependent on their context to be quoted. Lines of poetry and of prose altered to his will, stories, nonsense-rhymes, were brought forth at a moment's notice, and were often taken for his own. Nor did this impair his originality; rather, it seemed to show him as a resourceful administrator of wit — a born editor of other men's sayings as well as a producer of his own.

He was not always a good critic of himself. Readers of his letters will not fail to remark the number of his puns, or his pride in making them: indeed, perhaps nobody since Hood has been so inveterate a punster. In this his taste was old-fashioned, nor is it likely to appeal to a modern world. Yet he himself had a value for it. Even here he found place for the moral sense and tried to marry wit and humour:

'To hear,' he says, in a subtle analysis of the ethics of punning, 'of any ordinary man that he makes puns is properly a warning to avoid his society. For with the funny man, the verbal coincid-

ence is everything; there is nothing underlying it, or beyond it. In the hands of a Hood the pun becomes an element in his fancy, his humour, his ethical teaching, even his pathos. As ordinarily experienced, the pun is the irreconcileable enemy of these things. It could not dwell with them "in one house." Hood saw, and was the first to show, that the pun might become even their handmaid; and in this confidence dared to use it often in his serious poems, when he was conveying some moral truth or expressing some profound human emotion. . . . The ordinary pun is for the most part profoundly depressing, being generally an impertinence; while Hood's, at their best, exhilarate and fill the reader with a glow of admiration and surprise. The "sudden glory" which Hobbes pronounced to be the secret of the pleasure derived from wit is true of Hood's. . . . He never hesitated to make the pun minister to higher ends and vindicate its right to a share in quickening men's best sympathies.'

In Ainger's case, the pun generally 'ministered' to humour and to fancy, though now and again there was a moral. 'He looked down benignly from the pulpit with a *pew-rental* eye,' he once said of a fashionable clergyman. Many of his sallies, dependent on the moment only, are too ephemeral for reproduction; others, more tangible, remain. There was one occasion, at a dinner-party, when he spilt some wine upon the table. 'You would never have expected me to show such disrespect for the cloth,' he said apologetically to his hostess. Catastrophes at meal-times seem to have drawn out his wit. There is a record of a luncheon when the black dress of a guest of his suffered from an accident with a jar of Crosse and Blackwell's pickles:

> 'They've spilt all her pickles—
> How great is her loss!
> They don't suit her Black well,
> And so she is Cross,'

he exclaimed directly. No less prompt was his rejoinder one day, when some one told him that her dressmaker lived next door to Spencer Wells, the surgeon:

> 'Next to Mr. Spencer Wells,
> Madame White the modiste dwells.
> The reason why—are you a guesser?
> Next to the surgeon comes the dresser.'

His perception of hidden analogies seemed to spring from words while they were spoken. Even when his jests, as in the last two instances, were mere exercises of ingenuity, they showed that kind of tact towards words in which he always delighted. 'This little book,' he says of Hood's *Odes* . . . 'made it evident that "verbal wit" (as commonly so-called) was not necessarily the last resource of the would-be "funny man"; but in the hands of a poet and humorist was capable of quite unseen uses and developments.' He himself dealt in many instances of this kind of witticism:

> 'When William sings his best, we view
> In one a *Bill* and invoice too,'

was the Herrick-like couplet he addressed to his friend, William Smith. Or there were the verses, that he much enjoyed himself, written on his appointment to the Canonry. 'I profanely spoke of "cannoning off the red,"' says Mr. Horace Smith, alluding to this event, 'and he replied with the two following verses, which he always tried to pretend I had written':

(1) 'Ainger's made Canon, so 'tis said,
Because so very well he read:
"Ah, then," said Smith, demurely winking,
"He's cannoned off the red, I'm thinking."

(2) 'The Chancellor had been less blamed
If some great preacher he had named:
"Ah, then," said Smith, not even blushin',
"He'd then have cannoned off the cushion."'

As to his mere quickness in retort—his feats in rhyme—we might multiply the instances, were not such instances lifeless when repeated. They were flashes of electricity, meant to die with the occasion which engendered them. There was once a discussion as to rhymes at the Macmillans', and some one challenged the company to find a rhyme for 'porringer.' Immediately there came back Ainger's rejoinder:

> 'The Princess Mary fain would wed,
> They gave the Prince of Orange her,
> And now it never can be said,
> I've not a rhyme for "porringer."'

But most of his jokes need himself, his tone, his gesture, their original *mise-en-scène*, to produce their irresistibly droll effect. Among such, perhaps, was his solution of a country-house difficulty—a difficulty as to how a large party of visitors, at a place where he was staying, was to divide itself for the homeward journey between a hired barouche and a worn-out saddle-horse. 'Mr. White,' he said of a sudden, 'will accompany the party on the bones.' Yet the words written down sound flat—they miss their context; and we realise that the sight of that woe-begone horse, of the unequestrian Mr. White, and the flustered party in the carriage, could alone give the quip its vitality.

Ainger was not at his most amusing when he indulged in merely verbal fun. He was a treasure-house of the good stories that he had heard, but the turn he gave them made them his own. And he was not happy till he had found a participator. 'Your story was excellent, and I have already made several appreciative persons happy with it,' he once wrote to a Bristol correspondent. 'That was it,' says his friend, 'he made himself and others "happy" with good stories.' And perhaps no one understood as well as he that in intercourse 'the gift without the giver is bare.' He shared, he seemed to transmit, exhilaration down an ordinary uninspired dinner-table—and he liked the sense that he did so. The feeling of how much he was enjoying himself was one of the most infectious things about him; and the converse held good also, for his very moods were electric and acted upon the whole company, so that it would catch his silence as at other times it caught his gaiety.

The 'sudden glory' of Ainger's wit was its allusiveness—it was evoked by situation, and seldom crystallised into epigram. Few of his sayings became current coin, like 'No flowers, by request,' his *bon mot* upon the style of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, made at a dinner in its honour. The point of others, more intimate, depends upon the persons concerned. 'What do you feel about this marriage?' asked some one at the wedding of a very short bride and bridegroom.[1]

[1] See p. 299: Letter to Mrs. Andrew Lang.

'A fortuitous concurrence of atoms,' was his swift reply. Or there is his comment on an impecunious gentleman who had married a coloured heiress and did not get on with her. 'It seems a pity,' he remarked, 'that he should quarrel with his bread-and-butter, even though it is brown.' Again, when he was staying with Archdeacon Bather, whose many relations lived round about, and when he saw his friend's large clan congregate, as was their Sabbath wont, at the church-door, he was suddenly heard to mutter:

> 'And when on Sunday after church
> A crowd upon the grass-plot gathers,
> The poet-laureate might have said—
> "You scarce can see the grass for Bathers."'

He said these things soberly, as if he were making a bare statement, giving no sign of fun, except a shooting gleam from his eyes.

The subtle differences between fact and truth, between lesser and greater, were deftly grasped by Ainger; and he was heard to maintain that if a man made a story his own he had the right to embroider it, for it had passed from the domain of truth into that of art. And this was piquant, because it came from the most truthful of men, with the nicest of moral perceptions, and because he knew the due limits of his freedom.

'There are three graces,' he said, 'of which wit, if it is not the irreconcilable enemy, is at least a dangerous neighbour—the love of truth, charity and reverence. . . . It may have been from a perception of the inevitable tendency of wit . . . to exaggerate, . . . for the purpose of heightening effect . . . that so sober and profound a thinker as Pascal declared . . . *Diseur de bons mots, mauvais caractère:* not that it is intrinsically immoral to utter a witticism, but because the desire to amuse is inherently opposed to a reverence for the sanctity of truth.'

In all this, in its flights and its restrictions, his wit was very English, and it was, perhaps, at its best when it concerned men's character or the humours of society. We might almost venture to say that no Frenchman, even were he Sainte-Beuve, could possibly understand it; it is too freakish, too informal, too humorous.

And when everything is said, it is impossible to recreate it. With all good talkers this is difficult enough, but in his case the difficulty is trebled. Wit, like Sydney Smith's, at the same time greater and less delicate, is comparatively easy to reproduce, because it has substance and no wings. Ainger's wit is of a different cast; when you think that you have it, it takes flight; it is gossamer, impossible to hold. Sydney Smith dealt in generalities of common experience, which appeal to all sorts of men: he was never too refined—he was irresistibly exuberant—and subtlety was not what he made for. Ainger does not handle the affairs of the majority, for his wit mostly applies to individuals, is often too intricate to be quoted. And he had a liking for fine shades, which are sometimes unread by him who runs. They had, however, one point of resemblance—their conception of a wit's responsibilities.

'I was always struck,' wrote Ainger, 'by the confession of one who in his generation was, if not the first wit, certainly "in the very first line," and on the whole used that gift as not abusing it, and in the service of the best and humanest reforms of his time. In lecturing upon wit . . . he used some such language as this: "I am convinced that its tendency is to corrupt the understanding and harden the heart." Sydney Smith was in earnest, I believe, when he spoke thus. . . . A wit and a thinker could not fail to have learned from the temptations constantly present to himself the danger incident to those in whose minds wit had got the upper hand of thought. A habit that weakens the love of truth can hardly fail to corrupt the understanding. By keeping the mind's eye fixed upon the more superficial resemblances between things, it must hinder that growth in wisdom which is the prime duty of a spiritual being. Nor is it likely that a gift which looks for the laughter and applause of the moment as its reward, and which lends itself so readily to the purposes of scorn, should leave undisturbed the outflow of the affections. The desire for popularity is itself demoralising, and wit is almost always unscrupulous, for in unscrupulousness lies much of its power. . . . Wit is seldom a pioneer or a reformer . . . it has to study the taste of majorities. . . . It tends to dull the sense of the social charities of every day. . . . But the question remains unanswered, What are we to do in this matter? Are wit and humour to be repudiated? . . . Are we to shun a witticism as a thing in itself disgraceful? . . . The

experiment has been tried. The student of history must draw his own conclusions as to the success of the attempt. Puritanism had its success, and did a work which nothing but a strong religious impulse could have effected. But its position was necessarily unstable, for its ideal of life was incomplete. . . . God gives us taste, fancy, high spirits. If we ignore them, they avenge themselves upon us by leading us astray. They are talents and therefore handmaids for some end, and we must use them for some end, either in God's service or the devil's. Is there then a spiritual service which such gifts can render? Assuredly there is. Humour is in the region of our intellectual nature, what charity is in our moral. The function of humour is the exact opposite of that of wit. Humour is ever akin to sympathy. It is the power of understanding and appreciating the tastes, the prejudices, the likes and dislikes, the *humours* of others, and throwing over them that atmosphere of charity which makes men feel for one another, make allowances for their weaknesses, and understand how sacred and solemn a thing it is to share the common nature.'

It is fitting that a chapter on Alfred Ainger's humour should end upon the same note as that with which it began.

CHAPTER XIII

ALFRED AINGER AND CHARLES LAMB

Alfred Ainger's friendships in literature were much like his friendships with persons. With him, friendship in both respects remained what it always is in youth, an excitement, an ever fresh emotion. And literature provided him with one dominant sentiment—his love for Charles Lamb. He had other personal affinities—with Thomas Hood, with Edward FitzGerald; but in none were intimacy and admiration combined in the same way as in his feeling for Elia. 'Those who love him,' he once said, 'do not love him . . . by halves, but are content to be fanatical in their attachment.'

It was an attachment, as we know, which dated 'almost from his childhood.' Early in life he made himself familiar with Lamb's circumstances, his writings, his haunts, the books he loved. Ainger belonged by birthright to Lamb's Wednesday evenings. His was a kindred spirit, and the connection between them was no mere matter of imitation.

'He chose his companions from some individuality of character which they manifested. Hence not many men of science, and few professed literati, were of his councils.' So wrote Lamb of Elia; and Alfred Ainger's kind of wit, his tastes, his perversities, his amenities, all alike fitted him to be one of that circle. There were also certain outward resemblances to link them. The lives of both were early overshadowed by deep sorrow and heavy responsibilities. Both belonged to the Temple; both were of no time, and of no place except London; and both adored London as a mother whose side they were loth to leave. They enjoyed 'the impossibility of being dull in Fleet Street; the crowds, the very dirt and mud, the sun shining upon houses and pavements, the print-shops, the old book-stalls . . . steams of

soup from kitchens, the pantomimes, London itself a pantomime and a masquerade.' These words from Elia's pen[1] serve as a formula for both. And their very birthdays showed a nearness which Ainger was fond of dwelling on, for he was born on February 9th and Lamb on the day following. Analogies such as these wove a bond between them long before the lesser man became the greater one's biographer.

It was in 1881 that the 'Life of Charles Lamb' was published in Macmillan's *English Men of Letters* Series; in 1883, the same firm brought out Ainger's edition of Lamb's *Essays*, to which the plays and poems, the stories and miscellaneous pieces, were added later; and in 1888, his studies of Elia were completed by the two volumes of letters which appeared under his editorship.

In judging and enjoying all this work of Ainger's, one thing must never be forgotten—its entirely personal nature. He wrote as a lover and a friend, not as a scholar or a student. His notes are literary, not learned; and whether as chronicler or editor, he seeks to stir imagination rather than to feed the wish for knowledge. So personal was he, indeed, that he sometimes dealt with his subject rather like an actor with his part—interpreting his theme according to a foregone conception. This is, on the face of it, not the best qualification for an editor, and, as we shall see later, it weakened his work in that capacity. But it *is* a qualification for portrait painting, a certain amount of elimination being needful to give life to the picture; and hence Ainger's biography of Lamb will remain as a masterly study of Elia—delicate, harmonious, sincere. So will his criticism of Lamb's writing, which for depth and truth of judgment, has hitherto passed unrivalled.

No atmosphere could have better suited Alfred Ainger than that of Lamb's circle; of the poets of the Lake School who were his comrades. The omnipresence of their ethical instinct, even when they sowed their wild oats in the days of the Pantisocracy—the absence of personal passion in their natures—their domesticity—their spiritual beliefs—all these were traits that made him feel intimate with them. And this sense of

[1] Letter to Wordsworth, 1801.

familiarity with the friends of his friend gave fresh warmth to his rendering of the central figure.

His *Life* has now been some twenty-five years before the public. It stands almost as a classic, and, at this date, to dwell upon its merits seems needless. The limitations of space imposed by writing for a series necessarily kept Ainger from inserting a good many details, which afterwards found a place in his notes to Lamb's writings. But had he been able to add them to his portrait it would have gained nothing essential either in colour or in drawing. It is an achievement in the art of presentment that his portrait is complete in itself; that restrictions only served to concentrate, not to attenuate, his work; and that, from first to last, he had such confidence in Lamb that he could afford to see him as a whole. For if his power of symmetry is noteworthy, so is his power of fairness. It was this which lent depth to his love, while his love lent warmth to his justice. There is no part of his book so affecting as that in which he touches on Lamb's infirmities. He is neither the scientific surgeon, nor the patronising psychologist; he is ever the loyal follower who allows none to dare pity Elia unless he reverence him first. And this is effected by no pathetic strokes, but by a sober simplicity which Lamb would have been the first to approve. His judgment of Elia, the writer, is redolent of the same quality:

'That Lamb,' he says, 'was a poet was at the root of his greatness as a critic; and his own judgments of poetry show the same sanity to which he points in his poetical brethren. He is never so impulsive or discursive that he fails to show how unerring is his judgment on all points connected with the poet's art. There had been those before Lamb, for example, who had quoted and called attention to the poetry of George Wither; but no one had thought of noticing that his metre was also that of Ambrose Phillips, and that Pope and his friends had only proved their own defective ear by seeking to make it ridiculous. "To the measure in which these lines are written, the wits of Queen Anne's days contemptuously gave the name of Namby-Pamby, in ridicule of Ambrose Phillips, who has used it in some instances, as in the lines on Cuzzoni, to my feeling at least, very deliciously; but

Wither, whose darling measure it seems to have been, may show that in skilful hands it is capable of expressing the subtlest movement of passion. So true it is, what Drayton seems to have felt, that it is the poet who modifies the metre, not the metre the poet." It was in the margin of a copy of Wither's poems that this exquisite comment was originally made; and in such a casual way did much of Lamb's finest criticism come into being. All through his life, in letter and essay, he was making remarks of this kind, throwing them out by the way, never thinking that they would be hereafter treasured up as the most luminous and penetrative judgments of the century. . . . If the spiritual insight of Coleridge, and the unwearied industry and sober commonsense of Southey could be combined with the special genius of Charles Lamb, something like the ideal commentary on English literature might be the result.'

Or take this passage:

'It may well be asked why, with such a range of sympathy, from Marlowe to Ambrose Phillips, from Sir T. Browne to Sir William Temple, he was so limited, so one-sided, in his estimate of the literature of his own age? It is true that he was among the first in England to appreciate Burns and Wordsworth. But to Scott, Byron, and Shelley he entertained a feeling almost of aversion. He was glad (as we gather from the essay on the *Sanity of True Genius*) that "a happier genius" had arisen to expel the "innutritious phantoms" of the Minerva Press; but the success of the Waverley Novels seems to have caused him amazement rather than any other feeling. About Byron he wrote to Joseph Cottle: "I have a thorough aversion to his character, and a very moderate admiration of his genius: he is great in so little a way. To be a poet is to be the man, not a petty portion of occasional low passion worked up in a permanent form of humanity." Shelley's poetry, he told Barton, he did not understand, and that it was "thin sown with profit or delight." When he read Goethe's *Faust* (of course in an English version) he at once pronounced it inferior to Marlowe's in the chief *motive* of the plot, and was evidently content to let criticism end there. Something of this may be ascribed to a jealousy in Lamb—a strange and needless jealousy for his own loved writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and a fear lest the newcomers should usurp some of the praise and renown that he claimed for them; something, also, to a perverseness in him which made him like to

be in opposition to the current opinion, whatever it might be. He was often unwilling, rather than unable, to discuss the claims of a new candidate for public favour. He lived mainly in communion with an older literature. It was to him inexhaustible in amount and in excellence, and he was impatient of what sought to divert his attention from it. It was literally true of him that "when a new book came out—he read an old one."'

This might with equal truth have been said of Alfred Ainger; and the same resemblance will be recognised in what follows:

'The truth is, that for Lamb to enjoy a work of humour it must embody a strong human interest, or at least have a pulse of humanity throbbing through it. Humour, without pity or tenderness, only repelled him. It was another phase of the same quality in him, that—as we have seen in his estimate of Byron—when he was not drawn to the *man*, he was almost disabled from admiring, or even understanding, the man's work. Had he ever come face to face with the author for a single evening, the result might have been quite different. There is no difficulty, therefore, in detecting the limitations of Lamb as a critic. In a most remarkable degree he had the defects of his qualities. Where his heart was, there his judgment was sound. Where he actively disliked or was passively indifferent, his critical powers remained dormant. He was too fond of paradox, too much at the mercy of his emotions or the mood of the hour, to be a safe guide always. But where no disturbing forces interfered, he exercised a faculty almost unique in the history of criticism.'

There is not a word here that Ainger would not have endorsed about himself. There are other points of analogy which one feels he recognised—qualities and gifts, his by nature, which comparison probably accentuated in him. This is perhaps truest of certain aspects of his wit—his love for 'the senseless pun,' and

> 'The Bee-like Epigram
> Which a two-fold tribute brings
> (Honey gives at once and stings)';[1]

or else a turn for the Acrostic—which fascinated Lamb too—the more so, Ainger tells us, because it was of old 'a favourite

[1] Album-verses to Mrs. Augustus de Morgan, by Lamb.

amusement of the Elizabethans.' Nor was the cultivated allusiveness, so marked in Ainger's talk and writing, unrelated to his greater model. He himself applies the word to Lamb. 'Another feature of his style,' he writes, 'is its allusiveness. He is rich in quotations. . . . And besides those avowedly introduced as such, his style is full of quotations held—if the expression may be allowed—in solution.' Both men, too, were the creatures of moods. 'Whatever is, is to me a matter of taste or distaste; or when once it becomes indifferent, it begins to be disrelishing. I am, in plainer words, a bundle of prejudices—made up of likings and dislikings—the veriest thrall to sympathies, apathies, antipathies.' These words of Lamb's might not inaptly serve as an epitome of Lamb's biographer.

The next piece of work that fell to Ainger's pen was his edition of Lamb's works: the *Essays* and the *Last Essays of Elia*, which came out in 1883; the *Poems and Plays and Miscellaneous Essays*, the *Poems and Plays*, and *Mrs. Leicester's School and other Writings*, together with the *Tales from Shakspeare*, all published in the next three years.

He has himself defined his principle of selection in the editing of the *Essays*—a principle, of course, only exercised upon the smaller pieces collected from various periodicals,[1] and now bound up by him with *Mrs. Leicester's School.*

'Every writer of mark,' he says, 'leaves behind him shreds and remnants of stuff, some of which are characteristic and worthy of preservation, and some are otherwise; and it is, in my deliberate opinion, an injustice to any such writer to dilute his reputation by publishing every scrap of writing he is known to have produced, merely because the necessity of making a choice may expose the editor to the risk of censure.'[2] 'Some half-dozen prose pieces' are consequently left out—among them the 'unsavoury' *Vision of Horns*, which no true lover of Elia will regret; though so much can hardly be said for the omission of that ethereal fragment—that masterpiece

[1] Chiefly by Mr. Babson, who began to publish them in the *Atlantic Monthly Magazine*, in 1863.

[2] Introduction to *Mrs. Leicester's School, and other Writings in Prose and Verse*.

of moonshine—*The Defeat of Time*, a translation into prose of Hood's poem, the *Plea of the Midsummer Fairies*, which is recreated by Lamb in his own image.

Ainger's notes to these four volumes of Lamb's works make in themselves racy reading, much like good conversation, rich in allusion and story rather than in scientific learning. 'The impertinence,' he says, 'of criticism or comment, I hope has been almost entirely avoided,' and his hope is amply justified. They are notes to feed enjoyment without choking it—notes also of elucidation. For as 'some clue to the many disguises . . . in which the essays abound,' he has had in his hand a priceless 'list of initials'—the real names filled in by Lamb himself in his unmistakable handwriting. But the most attractive part of his editor's work is the criticism. He knows that you must enjoy before you can discern. He does not explain, he suggests; and for searching, yet not over-subtle appreciation of Elia, no better instance could be found than his Introductions to the *Essays* and the *Poems*:

'It is in such passages as these that Lamb shows himself, that indeed he is the last of the Elizabethans'—so he writes after quoting an extract from *The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple*. 'He had learned their great language, and yet he had early discovered, with the keen eye of a humorist, how effective for his purpose was the touch of the pedantic and the fantastical from which the noblest of them were not wholly free. He was thus able to make even their weaknesses a fresh source of delight, as he dealt with them from the vantage ground of two centuries.[1] He remains, and seems likely to remain, the last of the moderns whose affinity with the genius of the Elizabethan age enabled him to write, at one moment, in the *soluta oratio*—the "linked sweetness long drawn out" of Jeremy Taylor; and at another with the closely blended wit and tenderness of the later Euphuists; and in both so to write as one who was "to the manner born."'

'Hang the Age!' exclaimed Lamb one day, when some editor objected to his style as out of harmony with the taste of the day; 'Hang the Age! I will write for Antiquity!' And in a sense this always remained his habit.[2]

[1] Introduction to *Essays*.

[2] Introduction to *Poems, Plays, etc.*

Or again, this, on his humour:

'To many other qualities that go to make up that highly composite thing, Lamb's humour—to that feature of it that consists in the unabashed display of his own unconventionality—his difference from other people—and to that "metaphysical" quality of his wit which belonged to him in a far truer sense than as applied to Cowley and his school, it is sufficient to make a passing reference. But the mention of Cowley, by whom, with Fuller, Donne, and the rest, his imagination was assuredly shaped reminds us once more of the charm that belongs to the "old and antique" strain heard through all his more earnest utterances. As we listen to Elia the moralist, now with the terse yet stately egotism of one old master, now in the long-drawn-out harmonies of another, we live again with the thinkers and dreamers of two centuries ago.' [1]

And this, finally, about his style:

'One feels, rather than recognises, that a phrase or idiom or turn of expression is an echo of something that one has heard or read before. Yet such is the use made of his material that a charm is added by the very fact that we are thus continually renewing our experience of an older day. His style becomes aromatic, like the perfume of rose-leaves in a china jar.' [2]

A harder editorial task awaited Ainger when he undertook to annotate Lamb's *Letters*. There had been, as is well known, several incomplete editions before his. First Talfourd's charming and unprofessional volumes (1837 and 1847) containing comparatively few letters, mostly undated and unarranged, yet quickened with yesterday's remembrance, the ink as yet hardly dry upon them. There was nothing after this till 1868, when with W. Carew Hazlitt as initiator and Sala as editor, a collection of letters appeared. But it only got as far as one volume, and remained unfinished. Two years later, Hazlitt resumed the task, aided by the Moxons, with Purnell in the place of Sala; finally, in 1875, Percy Fitzgerald undertook the work, and brought out the edition known by his name. It had one advantage over others—that he had a larger number of originals to copy from than any of his successors are likely to

[1] Introduction to the *Essays*. [2] *Ibid.*

have, so many of these manuscripts now being scattered far afield. In 1886, Hazlitt published yet another edition including Talfourd's *Memorials* and *Letters*, with large additions of his own; and in 1888, there came Canon Ainger's two volumes, including many fresh letters, and especially those to John Dibdin. No collection since Talfourd's, till this one, had borne the impress of a first-hand critic or so strong a mark of personal friendship. Ainger was in the direct Talfourd line —of the race that Elia loved—which looked upon portraiture as an art and not a science; which set character above all, and tested a man by what was known of him rather than by piling up of detail—detail, too, which serves for little else than to prove the editor's accuracy. Still able to distinguish between the office of the biographer and that of the excavator, he did not set a fictitious value upon every broken fragment that turned up from the soil in which he dug; every note of invitation or thanks.

His qualities, however, had their defects, and, as we already pointed out, he sometimes dealt rather freely with his material. Yet when he suppressed a phrase or an expletive it was because he believed, as we do with those we love, that he knew Lamb better than Lamb knew himself; or, at least, that it seemed to him disloyal to remember words spoken when his friend was not at his best. But he did not actually leave out any feature essential to the whole—he only somewhat slurred over that side of Elia's wit which pleased him least. Nor would Elia have reproached him. 'I think I have a wider range of buffoonery than you. Too much toleration perhaps'—the sentence that Lamb wrote to Wordsworth — would surely have been the only admonition he would have addressed to Alfred Ainger. He himself, in speaking of the *Letters*, has summed up the matter in his own words:

'What,' he asks, 'constitutes the abiding fascination of Lamb's personality? *Not* his funny sayings—let the "funny man" of every generation lay this well to heart. His humour? Yes—for his humour was part and parcel of his character. It is character that makes men loved. It was the rare combination in Lamb of strength and weakness. He was "a hero, with a failing." His

heroism was greater than many of us could hope to show. Charity, in him, most assuredly fulfilled the well-known definition. It suffered long and was kind; it thought no evil; and it never vaunted itself nor was puffed up. And as we watch its daily manifestations, never asking for the world's recognition, never thinking it had done enough, or could do enough, for its beloved object, we may well reckon it large enough to cover a greater multitude of frailties than those we are able to detect in the life of Charles Lamb.'[1]

Ainger's notes to the *Letters* are, like those to the *Essays*, models from the literary point of view—discursive yet compressed; little storehouses of biography, not only of Lamb, but of his circle. Here and there, too, we come upon treasure trove: a new or little-known story, an unpublished set of album-verses; unconsidered trifles, perhaps, but of the true Elia metal. But Ainger belonged to the school of editor now obsolete—that of the cultivated gentleman with a prejudice in favour of reverence, the school most antipathetic to some young editors of to-day. *Autres temps, autres mœurs*—and *mœurs* are not the idol that this generation has chosen. One merit, however, it cannot deny to the elder critic. Through all his editing Ainger never forgets what a distinguished lover of Lamb has pointed out: that 'whoever has on his bookshelves the *Essays* and *Last Essays of Elia*, and the contents, in whatever form, of the two volumes first published in 1818, and an edition of the *Letters*, has within his reach all that is necessary to enable him to do the only thing that really matters, that is, participate in the joy of Charles Lamb.'[2] The 'only thing' is too often forgotten by the conscience-ridden expert editor of recent days, who well-nigh buries the genius before him beneath the mass of evidence collected, and refuses to reject any scrap of paper lest thereby he compromise his own soul—the man whose work seems to prove that the ancient spirit of hair-splitting, chased from its natural strongholds, has now taken refuge in the criticism of art and cannot be at home there.

[1] 'The Letters of Charles Lamb,' *Macmillan's Magazine*.
[2] Augustine Birrell, *The Speaker*, July 18, 1903.

Ainger's seven years' work upon Lamb brought him many interesting experiences besides those of study. He went upon voyages of discovery, and had letters from remote correspondents. Among the many that reached him were a few from persons who had known Charles Lamb. And the first of these is from the pen of Vice-Chancellor Bacon, written in his ninety-third year:[1]

'. . . My personal acquaintance with Mr. Lamb was by no means intimate. I knew him first through John Dibdin—one of my earliest and dearest friends—whose name appears among the letters you have preserved, and who well deserved the affectionate interest in which he was held by *C. L.* It was shortly after his, J. D.'s, death (as well as I recollect) that I again met *C. L.* at the house of Mr. Godwin. It must have been, I think, in 1824 or 5 (these dates are somewhat puzzling to us old people) that I, who was then a Lamb student, living in lofty chambers in Gray's Inn Square, prevailed upon Godwin and his wife, and his daughter, the widowed Mrs. Shelley, to visit me and to bring with them *C. L.* and his sister Miss Lamb. It is a long time ago—but I retain a vivid recollection of several most agreeable evenings in which, after tea, there ensued a modest repast of sandwiches—which, in his jocund letters, he calls "brencheese." This must have been about the days of the *London Magazine*, but after the unfortunate duel,[2] which was (perhaps) the cause of the failure of this once promising periodical. Some of the contributors—Hamilton Reynolds, James Weathercock (Wainewright), who, if he escaped it, *deserved* hanging, and others; the brothers Charles and Edwin Landseer, and other young painters and members of the *Corps dramatique*—enlivened the assembly occasionally. In all the doings there the influence of *C. L.* was constantly perceived. Without any remarkable flashes of wit, he shed around a spirit of mirth—threw in gleams of irresistible drollery—pulled away the mask of all seriousness, and evoked the spirit of fun out of the most unpromising subjects.

'All these diversions, however, came to an end. I had to descend from my air-built abode and to engage in more serious labours. I became married, and was called to the Bar early in 1827, and had, of necessity, to occupy chambers on the

[1] 1890, after receiving Canon Ainger's edition of the *Letters*.

[2] Between Scott, the editor, and Christie; Scott was killed (1821).

ground floor for the access of possible clients, and to engage in pursuits which, for the next sixty and more years of my existence, occupied all my thoughts and commanded all my exertions, and so I lost or relinquished many of my earlier acquaintances.

'Your most pleasant books have called up the remembrance of former days and departed friends. "I cannot but remember such things were," and were most precious to me.

'The letters are not only delightful in themselves, grave, gay, severe, pathetic, and all redolent of the rare spirit which has made *Elia* a joy for ever; but because they give a most faithful portrait of the writer "as he lived"—not a photograph which draws only a momentary glimpse of the object—but a durable presentment, which displays it in its various moods and in its true colours, and speaks its very words.

'I congratulate you upon the care, and skill, and good taste, with which you have shown the world how well *C. L.* deserves the admiration you feel for him—and which is the best reward you can desire for the labour of love you have bestowed upon your task.

'I beg you to believe that I am sincerely and faithfully yours.—

'James Bacon.'

'That quotation from Macduff's lament over his children, "I cannot but remember such things were," moved me more than I can tell,' was Ainger's comment on this letter in one of his own to Dykes Campbell. Another among his correspondents might have made the same quotation—one Miss Sarah Ann Hunter, who, in her youth, had lived near Elia, at Enfield, and wrote thus about him to Canon Ainger—

'. . . I have some little scruples about sending the lines written by Charles Lamb on me to a stranger. It seems foolishly egotistical! Yet I am not quite sure that it is; for at seventy-one, the *Self* of sixteen or seventeen *has so long passed away,* I may as well think of it as an old friend of former times, who had much girlish enjoyment in the Poet's company, and complimentary lines.

'It was at Enfield we met; as my grandmother resided near Charles Lamb and his sister, and there was social intercourse between the inmates of the two houses.

I was still a schoolgirl and on a holiday visit, and I had some

very pleasant walks with Charles Lamb and Emma Isola, when one day he left an envelope addressed :—

"Miss Hunter,

"With C. L.'s respects.

"May be opened by any one."

"Inside was a half-sheet of paper with :—

SONG.

1.

"Old bards have rehears'd how with quiver and bow
The bright virgin goddess a-hunting would go ;
All day thro' the forests her shafts she let fly ;
And at eve chased her brother, the Sun, down the sky.
But a mortal we boast of, that rival her can ;
'Tis the Hunter of Hunters—the fair Sarah Ann.

2.

No need has our Cynthia of hounds, or of horns,
And the troublesome load of a quiver she scorns ;
Soft looks are her arrows, whenever she speeds,
And the victim, that feels them, contentedly bleeds.
Soft looks are her arrows—escape her who can—
This Hunter of Hunters, this fair Sarah Ann.

3.

Diana, besides, was a bit of a Prude,
And turn'd folks into stags, that presum'd to be rude,
Our Dian, less cruel, all rudeness defies,
And the boldest turn modest, subdued by her eyes.
Then fill up a bumper—refuse it who can—
To this Hunter of Hunters, this fair Sarah Ann.

(Signed) Chs. Lamb."

'As I was a very practical girl, I do not think I duly appreciated being a modern Cynthia ; but I valued the poet's kindness, and felt a very warm regard for the bright little old man who took notice of me, and laughed at my fun as if he were but a school-boy. My seniors, on the contrary, thought of the lines as they deserved, particularly my mother, who was much pleased with them.

'I have written to Canada for some lines Mr. Lamb wrote on a very beautiful girl connected with our family ; if I get them I will send them to you.—Yours truly, Sarah Ann Hunter.

'Temple Villa, Orchard Road,
Kingston-on-Thames, *Feb.* 10*th*, 1886.'

Sometimes, too, we come upon some note, a question, a statement, which conjures up spirits from the past. Most readers of Lamb will remember William Ayrton, the friend of the Burneys, the musical critic, to whom Lamb addressed his brilliant verses beginning:—

'Oh Mr. Ayrton!
For all your rare tone —

It is amusing to find his son writing in 1883 from Saltburn to claim a joke for his father—a joke made some sixty years before.

'I enclose a note,' he says, 'of my recollections of Lamb's eccentricity at a Wednesday evening at my father's. If you have an opportunity, state that "Martin, if dirt were trumps"[1] was not Lamb's, but my father's; this, I have more than once heard my father claim.'

This had come in answer to a note from Canon Ainger, interesting merely because it shows the way he set to work. 'Of course' (it runs) 'there are in existence many letters of Lamb's that are *merely notes*—accepting invitations, or making appointments for social gatherings, which contain few or no special indications of Lamb's humour or character. Such as these are hardly worth printing, but I am sure there must be many still in existence that exhibit traits of his humour or eccentricity, and throw light on his character or peculiarities. I will most gladly leave to your critical judgment to select any of the letters in your possession that may seem to you interesting for the just-mentioned or any other reasons.'

Correspondents such as these, who had seen Elia in the flesh, were necessarily few, and they also have now passed away. But other sources of knowledge remain. With Lamb it was—and is—'Love me, love my friends'; and to such as do so, the following letter about Thomas Manning,[2] the

[1] 'Martin, if dirt were trumps, what a hand you'd have.' Reported to have been said by Charles Lamb to Martin Burney at a game of whist on one of Lamb's Wednesday evenings.

[2] Thomas Manning was mathematical tutor at Caius College, Cambridge, and it was in that town that he first met Charles Lamb, in 1799. 'After he had lived at Cambridge for some years he began to brood over the mysterious

Chinese traveller, the recipient of some of Lamb's best letters, 'the most wonderful man he ever knew,' will perhaps be not unwelcome. It was written by Mr. J. E. Davis, of the Middle Temple, an Elian scholar and Canon Ainger's constant colleague in his labours.

Of Manning he writes:—

'I am not aware of nor can I find any source of information beyond what is disclosed by Procter and by Lamb's letters. I am trying to trace Manning's doings in China from 1805 to 1815. Procter says he understood his original intention when he set out for China was to frame and publish a Chinese and English dictionary, and that he brought over much material for the purpose; but there are indications, as you know, that this labour was subsidiary of the missionary spirit ("you are gone to plant the cross of Christ"). I take it that Manning was acquiring knowledge of every kind likely, or rather inevitable, to be of use when out. Lamb, writing to Hazlitt, Nov. 10, 1805, says "Manning is come to town in spectacles, and studies *physic*; is melancholy, and seems to have something in his head, which he don't impart."

'Although the inference is that Manning kept his intentions to himself, there are indications in Lamb's letter to him of July 17th in the same year, that he had disclosed an intention to take a voyage.

'Manning was off early in 1806, contemplating an absence of four years. It is remarkable that Lamb, writing to him on May 10th, says "the four years you talk of may be ten." Ten years was the time Manning was away. I have not as yet found any trace of Manning's work in China, but it is odd if such a large-hearted man, as he evidently was, did not leave his mark somewhere. I am myself so narrow-minded as not to expect from

empire of China,' and 'resolved to enter the Celestial Empire at all hazards.' He studied Chinese in France as well as in England, and when he went home in 1803, his passport was the only one that Napoleon signed for an Englishman returning to his country after the war broke out—a fact entirely due 'to the respect in which his undertaking was held by the learned men at Paris.' He went to Lhasa in 1811, and remained away for nearly twelve years, after which he came back to Europe a disappointed man. He lived in Italy from 1827-1829, and after that in England, first 'in strict retirement' at Bexley, then in a cottage near Dartford. 'He led a very eccentric life. It is said that he never furnished his cottage, but only had a few chairs, one carpet, and a large library of Chinese books. He wore a milky white beard down to his waist.' He died at Bath, in 1840.

a missionary of the ordinary type the capacity to enter with zeal into the topics of the letter referred to, indeed, of much that Lamb wrote.

'Crabb Robinson alludes to Manning three or four times. Under the date of Dec. 30th, 1807, when he met Coleridge and Wordsworth at Lamb's, C. R. says, "Coleridge was philosophising in his rambling way to Monkhouse, who listened attentively—to Manning, who sometimes smiled, as if he thought Coleridge had no right to metaphysicise on chemistry without any knowledge of the subject."'

Some of the pleasantest associations that Canon Ainger had with Elia were the festive little journeys that he made in connection with his work. One of these was to Woodbridge, in Suffolk, whither he went to gather information about Lamb's friend, Bernard Barton. And Mr. Loder of that town has kept his first impressions of him when he came there on this occasion.

'Burkitt House,
'Woodbridge, *Jan.* 3, 1905.

'. . . I had the very great pleasure of coming in contact with Canon Ainger a few years ago when he was editing Lamb's Letters and being desirous of learning some particulars of Lamb's friend and correspondent Barton, the Quaker poet, who resided here the major portion of his life.

'I fell in love with him "on sight." He walked in, telling me that som friend in London had mentioned my name as a likely person to give him information about Barton, adding "that he always made it a point when he was writing about any one to verify for himself by personally visiting the place where such person resided."—(*O si sic omnes*—we should have fewer lies in print.)

'I of course gladly volunteered to act as cicerone, so I showed him the Bank where Barton worked, the house where he resided, and the burying-ground in the quiet Quaker Meeting House Yard where he was laid.

'I found him the most perfect gentleman, a great scholar, with the face of a saint.

'Now for a somewhat curious little episode. Some while after his visit, in reading over again Lamb's correspondence with Barton, I found reference to a letter from the Revd. J. Mitford

(Editor, as you know, of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for many years), telling Barton he was wishing to get a quantity of china, and asking Barton if he could recommend him any one who could assist him in the matter. Barton pounced immediately on Lamb, and for his reply I refer you to Letter 251 (Edn. 1888).[1]

'At Mitford's death his effects were all sold—and a friend of mine bought a lot of the china—and, I remember, a *jardinière* some 30 inches high which he had failed to dispose of. I rushed over and secured, and sent it to the Canon with my etc., etc. He was hugely pleased, and in return he sent me a volume of Lamb's Essays, beautifully bound in morocco.'

But his favourite trips were to Lamb's own country—to "Blakesmoor" (really Blakesware) in the village of Widford, to the cottage, near by, of "Alice W." and of "Rosamund Gray"—and to Mackery End in Hertfordshire. He has himself described the first of these expeditions in his charming paper—"How I traced Charles Lamb in Hertfordshire."

'It was a lovely day,' he wrote, 'in June or July, that we arrived in Ware, and, having ordered dinner on our return at the inn, chartered a conveyance and drove through the rural Hertfordshire landscape, so sweetly and characteristically English, and were deposited at the gate of Widford rectory.' Later they were guided to 'Lamb's Blakesmoor'—happily guided, for 'old roads have been diverted, and old landmarks removed, so that the site of the old house, now marked by a young plantation, would have escaped our search. But now that it was pointed out, we could still trace by the undulations in the meadow behind that site where the "ample pleasure-garden" once "rose backward from the house in triple terraces," and yet further back, that "firry wilderness, haunt of the squirrel and the day-long murmuring pigeon."'

[1] "If Mr. Mitford will send me a full and circumstantial description of his desired vases, I will transmit the same to a gentleman resident at Canton, whom I think I have interest enough in to take the proper care for their execution. But Mr. M. must have patience. China is a great way off, further perhaps than he thinks; and his next year's roses must be content to wither in a Wedgewood pot." Ainger's Note upon this passage in his last edition of Lamb's Letters (1904) runs: 'One of Mr. Mitford's vases, which were actually made in China and sent home, is now, through the friendly offices of Mr. John Loder of Woodbridge, in the Editor's possession.' *Lamb's Letters*, Macmillan, 1904, vol. ii. (Notes), p. 343.

And the writer tells us how he found more than the site of the old mansion, which enchanted Elia's childhood.

'I wished, if possible,' he says, 'to find the actual name, if nothing else, of the "Anna," of the sonnets, the "Alice" of the Essays . . . the fair-haired maid whom he had loved in these youthful days—loved but failed to win.'

And luck or Elia's kindly spirit befriended him. He had an introduction to the rector's family. "I think Mr. Ainger might like to see Mrs. Tween," said one of them—and it was explained that Mrs. Tween was an old lady who had known Charles Lamb in her youth. She lived close by in a house in the village street of Widford, 'an old-fashioned farmhouse-looking abode,' to which Ainger was forthwith taken. He 'passed through the homely garden' full of 'stocks and sweet-william and mignonette,' and found himself in the lady's presence.

'Our guide from the rectory soon struck a responsive chord by telling that Mr. Ainger was connected with the Temple Church. From the moment that the word Temple was pronounced, the ice was broken, and "indifference was no more." Mrs. Tween was herself, she said, a native of the Temple, and it was there that her family's friendship with the Lambs had been cemented. "Might I ask," I interrupted, "what was his name?" "Randal Norris." My friend and myself looked at one another, "like bold Cortez and his men," in a wild surmise. . . . The whole pathetic story of the Lamb family and their great sorrow came flooding on my memory. And that saddest of sad letters sent by Charles to his school-friend, Coleridge, after the fatal day . . . irresistibly prompted the quotation I uttered. "Mr. Norris has been as a father to me; Mrs. Norris as a mother"; and as I spoke the words I saw Mrs. Tween's eyes fill with tears, and I felt that we were no longer strangers.'

For this was, indeed, the daughter of that Randal Norris, the Librarian and Sub-Treasurer of the Temple, the staunch friend of the Lamb family, the last person to die who had still called Elia 'Charley'; and to her, Jane Norris, afterwards Jane Tween, was addressed the last letter of Mary Lamb's that we possess.

But the end of discoveries was not yet.

'Could Mrs. Tween tell me anything about the fair-haired maid? Did she actually live in Widford, and what was her name? Yes, she lived very near Blakesware, and cottages stood on the site of her dwelling. . . . And her name? "Oh! her name was Nancy Simmons." "Nancy," I cried, for I felt I was losing the one fact I had ascertained. "I had thought it was Ann." "Certainly," replied my informant—"Ann, but she was always called Nancy." Ann Simmons, then, had been the Anna, the Alice with the watchet eyes and the "yellow Hertfordshire hair." But of her and her fortunes Mrs. Tween had little or nothing else to tell.'

This visit was the beginning of a friendship between Ainger and Mrs. Tween. She grew to love Ainger and to look upon him as a link with old days and with her home at the Temple. It was her relics of Charles Lamb that afterwards became his —'a little plaster head of Samuel Salt' among them—and to her he liked to take his *friends in Elia*, when he made his holiday journeys. Among these friends Mr. Dykes Campbell ranked first, and the notes in which Ainger planned these jaunts to Hertfordshire make no unfitting epilogue to a chapter on his editorial work.

'2 Upper Terrace,
'Hampstead, *Friday, May* 18*th*, 1888.

'My dear Campbell (says the first),—I should like nothing better than such a "frisk" (as Samuel Johnson called it) as you propose. But I think *Thursday* of next week would be the only day that I could manage it. What say you to a ride by train to *Ware*, and then take on a gig (thoroughly *respectable*), or other conveyance to Widford and Blakesware—or, if you prefer it, to Wheathampstead, walking on to Mackery End, and so home by Harpenden or Hatfield. I am equally ready for either outing. For further particulars, see "Small Bills."—Yours always,

'Alfred Ainger.'

'2 Upper Terrace,
Hampstead, *Saturday, May* 19*th*.

'My dear Campbell,—Yours just received. Let us say *Thursday*, and I will arrange details of tour. Widford and Blakesware shall

be our goal, and I will communicate with Mr. Lockwood, the homely Vicar of Widford, as to seeing church and all else—and we will call on old Mrs. Tween. Our route is to Ware by Great Eastern. I will write in due course, and enclose list of trains, etc.

'I have lost my voice—through sudden changes of weather; bad for to-morrow—but I shall speak "as I was wont to speak," I hope, long before Thursday.—Ever yours, ALFRED AINGER.'

'2 UPPER TERRACE,
'HAMPSTEAD, *Monday, May 21st*, 1888.

'MY DEAR CAMPBELL,—I am venturing to change our programme for Thursday. I have this morning from Mr. Lockwood of Widford an earnest entreaty to us to postpone our visit there for another week, as he will be away from home, and his rectory is in the miseries of a spring cleaning. He thinks the Tweens are also vernally cleaning themselves.

'I am therefore going to take you to Mackery End instead. . . . We get to Wheathampstead by 12.40, in time for some bread and cheese and beer at the village inn, and then we go on to Mackery End; and from there I think we will walk to Harpenden, have some tea there, and return in rude health to London by dinner time. How say you?—Yours always, ALFRED AINGER.

'But we will do Widford another day!'

We are tempted to insert at this point a letter from old Mrs. Tween, because, though its date is two years later, it finds its natural place here. It was written after a sermon preached in Widford Parish Church on Charles Lamb by Canon Ainger, and seems to belong by right to the memories of visits to Blakesmoor:—

'GODDARD HOUSE,
'WIDFORD, *8th November* 1890.

'MY DEAR FRIEND, REV. CANON AINGER,—Excuse my troubling you with a few words of thanks, and to acknowledge the receipt of the *Days of Old*, which I received this day by post at 8 A.M. It has given me great pleasure, and I am sure you will rejoice with me that I hear from all parties that *old*, *middle-aged*, and *young*, the whole congregation, were *unanimously* gratified with all they heard from you, and not only them, but the family at the

New Blakesware Mansion too. You are, and I hope will ever be, a great favourite there.

'I fear I have trespassed on too much of your time, but I hope the report of the proceedings will be as gratifying to you as to me.

'With kindest regards to all your family circle, I am, my dear friend, your truly obliged, JANE TWEEN.'

CHAPTER XIV

CORRESPONDENCE ABOUT CHARLES LAMB

Canon Ainger's correspondence during the seven years that we have been reviewing is full of minutiae about Charles Lamb. We have chosen a few of the letters that do not seem over-technical as a record of the details of his work. They are addressed to Mr. Dykes Campbell, and need no further introduction :—

'2 Upper Terrace,
'Hampstead, *Sept.* 27, 1886.

'My dear Mr. Campbell,—Thanks for your kind note. I saw Mr. Thomas Bain yesterday—he was down here spending the day—and I learned from him that you have seen the *treasure* with the portrait of Lamb, and have heard of my *delight* at discovering, just in the nick of time, the book I was in search of—mentioned in Lamb's letter to Cottle. It was a curious coincidence indeed, and I am preparing a little paper for the *Athenæum*, telling the story of the discovery.[1] Tedder, the Librarian of the Athenæum Club, told me that Bain had something to show me, and I went

[1] Canon Ainger has told the story fully in his Notes to *Charles Lamb's Letters* (Macmillan, 1904, vol. ii. p. 325) :—

'This letter to Lamb's old friend, Joseph Cottle, publisher and poet of Bristol, has, I venture to think, an interesting history attached to it. This and the following two letters were first printed by Cottle in his *Early Recollections of Coleridge*, published in 1837. Cottle gave the date of the first two correctly (1819), but by some oversight dated the last of the three 1829. Recent editors have made the error complete by dating them all 1829. Accordingly, in the autumn of 1886, when engaged in arranging the letters for the present edition, I was perplexed by this confusion of dates, and could discover no internal evidence in the letters themselves to resolve my doubts. A recent editor of Lamb's Correspondence had confidently announced that the Collection of Likenesses of British Bards was a certain work called *Effigies Poeticae*, being a set of portraits of distinguished English poets, with short notices of their lives and works, which was not in fact issued till the year 1824. This work (the letterpress of which, issued anonymously, was by Barry Cornwall) only included poets already deceased, and therefore did not contain any portrait or notice of Joseph Cottle. When I had given up hope of finding any clue to the mystery,

over at once and found the very thing I had been in search of for a month past. I have since got other important particulars which connect the book, beyond all question, with Lamb. But what a —— X. must be to go and assert, as a *fact* that he *knew for certain*, that Lamb wanted the portrait for Procter's *Effigies Poeticæ*!

'By the way, could you find out for me the precise date of Mr. and Mrs. Procter's marriage? I don't want it out of idle curiosity, but because the date of *two* letters of Lamb's hang upon it. I am getting on fast now with the arrangement of the letters, but it is difficult work—in which I do *not* receive much help from my *predecessors*.—Yours always sincerely, ALFRED AINGER.'

'*Dec.* 11*th*, 1886.

'. . . I, too, have to report *Treasure Trove*. Would you be surprised to hear that I have at this moment in my possession the MSS. of *all* Lamb's letters to Manning, and at least *two* that have never been printed, and are full of interest, *one* of the year 1834, the last year of Lamb's life? I will tell you more when we meet.—Yours always, ALFRED AINGER.'

'*Dec.* 14*th*, 1886.

'I have a long engagement to go into Hertfordshire to-morrow for a night, to preach for the Rector of *Widford*. I must not run

the actual volume indicated by Lamb came to light. It proved to be a copy of Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, profusely illustrated with engravings and drawings of the various poets and other literary characters occurring in the famous satire. My attention was called to the copy by its containing as its solitary water-colour drawing a hitherto unknown portrait of Charles Lamb, by Mr. Joseph, A.R.A.: but on examining the book further, I found that it contained also a pencil-drawing of Joseph Cottle, evidently copied from a miniature. The date of the compilation, as given on a special title-page, was 1819, and the person by whom it was compiled, one William Evans. By inquiring from the latest possessor of the volume, I discovered that this Mr. Evans was Lamb's old friend of that name, a colleague in the India House, to whom Lamb owed his first introduction to Talfourd. Here, then, was beyond doubt the "particular friend" who was making a selection of the "Likenesses of Living Bards." That Lamb was perfectly well aware of the use Mr. Evans proposed to make of the portraits in question we cannot doubt; and we can imagine with what characteristic equanimity he was allowing his own portrait to appear in illustration of lines by Byron quite as scornful as those in which poor Cottle was described. As Joseph Cottle, however, might not have received the intelligence with the same philosophic calm, Lamb did not think it necessary to inform his old friend of the precise destination of his portrait. Since I made known these facts in the columns of the *Athenæum*, Mr. Evans's volume has passed into the keeping of the British Museum.'

any risks. You will not need my assurance that I did not lightly break an engagement, the effect of which was not only to deprive me of much pleasant converse with you and Mrs. Campbell—but to deprive me also of Mrs. Procter *in the flesh*, and her stepfather, Basil Montagu, *in the spirit* (or rather in the *Protest against Spirit*!) Please tell Mrs. Procter this. When may I come and make it up—Friday? or Monday?—Yours, deeply grieving,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

'*April 15th*, 1887.

'. . . But I have another Coleridgian *Crux* for you. In Lamb's Latin letter to Coleridge of October 9, 1802, dealing chiefly with Coleridge's then recent contributions to the *Morning Post*, there occurs a sentence of which the following is as near a translation as is possible, without understanding the allusions in it. The "Ludus" referred to may be one of many things, for it has several meanings in Latin. At present I think it might mean something like "jeu d'esprit." If so, we read as follows:—

'"The American Ludus (jeu d'esprit) of which you prattle so much, Coleridge, I pass by—as utterly abhorrent from a 'jeu d'esprit' (as such things go). For tell me, what 'spree' is there in wickedly alienating from us, for the sake of a joke, the good-will of the whole Columbian nation? I ask for subject matter for a 'bit of fun'; and you offer me 'bloody wars'!"[1]

'You see, this paraphrase may be very wide of the mark, for all depends upon what Lamb meant by the *Ludus*. The most probable interpretation seems to me to be that Lamb, who wrote occasionally epigrams and such trifles for the *Post*, had asked Coleridge to suggest him some *subjects*, and that the latter had rather flippantly suggested the relations of England and America, which were then (as you know) once more becoming strained, in consequence of the Anglo-French troubles. Have you, in the "great heap of your knowledge" (de Coleridgio et multis aliis), any probable or possible explanations of the passage?

[1] Mr. E. V. Lucas has furnished us with the explanation in his edition of *Lamb's Letters* (Letter XCVII. vol. i. p. 249). He gives us Mr. Stephen Gwynn's translation of the Latin paragraph in question. 'As for your Ludus (Lloyd),' it runs, 'whom you talk of as an "American," I pass him by as no sportsman (as sport goes): what kind of sport is it, to alienate utterly the good will of the whole Columbian people, our own kin, sprung of the same stock, for the sake of one Ludd (Lloyd)? I seek the material for diversion: you heap on war.'

To which Mr. Lucas adds this note:—

'Ludus is Lloyd. Lamb means by "American" what we should mean by pro-American.' Compare Lady Sarah Lennox (*Letters*, i. 277).

'You will see from this letter of Lamb's how I was set inquiring as to the identity of Wordsworth with "Edmund."[1] I have had great trouble with this letter, and two of the best Latinists connected with Shrewsbury School have been helping me. All the other allusions in the letter are clear enough, including a charming one to little Derwent Coleridge.

'If you will kindly answer this, please address to the Athenæum Club till after Wednesday.—Yours always, ALFRED AINGER.

'As to the change from "Edmund" to the "Lady"—this even the discreet knight has not yet fathomed. Have you any theories?'

'CALLANDER HOUSE,
'CLIFTON, *July* 18, 1887.

'MY DEAR CAMPBELL,—You are the "Inexhaustible Bottle" of the conjurer, and can produce any wine or vintage for which the company call. Thank you sincerely for so promptly sending the 1815 *Wordsworth*, from which I have just now constructed a tolerably complete note (I trust) on two of Lamb's letters to the Poet. It is a most interesting edition in all sorts of ways. . . .

'When do you actually leave town? You will let me know your address. I shall soon, I hope, have some more proofs for you (not, I fear, proofs of *friendship*).—Ever yours,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

'CALLANDER HOUSE,
'CLIFTON, BRISTOL, *Friday, Sept.* 2, 1887.

'MY DEAR CAMPBELL,—All your strictures and suggestions were most acceptable. Especially was I grateful for pointing out that a note on the first occurrence of the name of Talfourd would be acceptable, and I have amended the defect. Your latest note about the "Flocci-nauci,"[2] etc., etc., is very curious. I knew that

[1] In the ode on 'Dejection' where Wordsworth is invoked as 'Edmund,' a mode of address which was changed in later editions to 'Lady.'

[2] Letter xx., *Lamb's Letters*, vol. i. p. 62. 'Well may the "ragged ollowers of the Nine" set up for flocci-nauci-what-do-you-call-'em-ists.' In his note to this letter, vol. i. p. 318, Ainger says: '*Flocci-nauci-what-do-you-call-em-ists* may be deemed worthy of a note. Flocci, nauci is the beginning of a rule in the old Latin grammars, containing a list of words signifying of no account, *floccus* being a lock of wool and *naucus* a trifle. Lamb was recalling a sentence in one of Shenstone's letters: "I loved him for nothing so much as his flocci-nauci-nihili-pili-fication of money."'

Lamb was a great reader of Shenstone and it was from that quarter it came, I have no doubt. I have only this day had the pleasure of giving the stanza from that poet from which Lamb fabricated his exquisite, "If he bring but a relict away." [1] . . .

'A friendly correspondent from the India Office sends me a transcript from the old E. I. House Records of the Minute fixing and awarding Lamb's pension—Tuesday 29th of March 1825. Lamb's salary at the time was, it appears, £730.

'By the way, what is the meaning of the paragraph in the *Athenæum*, p. 140, about a second performance of "Mr. H." at the Lyceum, playbill written by Lamb. Surely the Lyceum was not built till after Lamb's day, was it? I expect it will turn out to be the performance got up by Charles Mathews, junior, when a very young man.' [2]

'The Athenæum Club, *Tuesday Afternoon, Nov.* 29.

'My dear Campbell,—My best thanks for the fragment of the *Quarterly* containing Lamb's Wordsworth Paper, which I am very glad indeed to have. I found a curious thing. The paper that *follows* Lamb's is a Review of Schlegel's *Lectures on Dramatic Literature*. The Reviewer summarises Schlegel's remarks on the various dramatic authors of the world. Among these occurs *Euripides*, and the Reviewer points out how Euripides sacrificed everything to the drawing tears from the eyes of his audience. There is the *Sacerdos Commiserationis* we have been looking for—there, beyond all doubt, while Lamb pored over these pages, he found the passage and remembered it.[3] I have just returned to

[1] Letter cccxxxiii., *Lamb's Letters*, Macmillan, vol. ii. p. 172. 'She'd make a good match for any body (by she, I mean the widow)—

'If he bring but a *relict* away,
He is happy, nor heard to complain.'—Shenstone.

Note to this letter, p. 352: See Shenstone, Pastoral Ballad, '"Absence"'—

'"The pilgrim that journeys all day
To visit some far distant shrine,
If he bear but a relique away
Is happy, nor heard to repine."'

[2] 'It was played at an amateur performance by the late C. J. Mathews in 1822, as recorded in the actor's memoirs.'—Ainger's note on 'Mr. H.,' *Poems, Plays, and Essays*. Macmillan, 1895.

[3] This may perhaps refer to two letters written by Lamb in his own particular Latin. The first (Letter ccccxxvii., *Lamb's Letters*, Macmillan, vol. ii. p. 281)

the printers the corrected first proofs of my Introduction. When I get the revise I will send it you, that you may "correct the more obvious blunders!" as Thompson said of Whewell.—Ever yours, ALFRED AINGER.

'I have just read the *Coleorton Letters* (lent me by George Macmillan), *most* interesting. How one loves Wordsworth and his sister more and more!'

'2 UPPER TERRACE,
'HAMPSTEAD, *Tuesday, Dec.* 13, 1887.

'MY DEAR CAMPBELL.—I must send you a few lines to thank you for your kind letter. All your suggestions in the matter of correction were worthy of notice, and I have polished several of my sentences in accordance therewith. And now the proofs are out of my hands (Index alone excepted) and I await calmly the issue. I suppose the volume can't be ready before the end of January, if so soon, but I quite hope they will be in time to find you still in the same mind about the Roast Pig and Hare (*Roasted*, if you love me, not jugged. It tastes so "crips,"[1] the former way!) to which I look forward with a thankful longing. It is a beautiful and a friendly thought of yours. . . .

'I also met poor Charles Kent yesterday at the Athenæum. No editorial jealousy about *him*! Nothing but genuine and kindly

is to Bernard Barton, and commends to his notice certain proverbs to 'recall you to the recovery of my lost Latinity.' Among these is the following:

'Tom, Tom of Islington, married a wife on Sunday. He brought her home on Monday; Bought a stick on Tuesday; Beat her well on Wednesday; Sick was she on Thursday; Dead was she on Friday; Glad was Tom on Saturday night, to bury his wife on Sunday.'

We use Ainger's translation in this and in the second letter (Letter CCCCXXIX., p. 282), which is to the Rev. H. F. Cary: '. . . We must sometimes exchange He! He! He! for Heu! Heu! Heu! That the Tragic Muse is not wholly repugnant to me, witness this song of Disaster, originally written by some unknown author in the vernacular, but lately turned by me into Latin—I mean, "Tom of Islington." Do you take? . . . And finally Tom is filled with joy that on the following day (Sunday, to wit) his spouse must be carried out to burial. Lo! a domestic iliad! a cycle of calamity! a seven days' tragedy!

'Go now and compare your vaunted Euripides with griefs like these! Such a death of wives as this! Where is your Alcestis now? your Hecuba? your other Dolorous Heroines of Antiquity?'

[1] 'And do it nice and *crips* (that's the cook's word).'—Letter from Lamb to Dodwell, October 7, 1827.

interest in everything I have done for Lamb since his time. He is a Lamb editor I really respect and feel affection for.

'Lathbury has sent me the *Coleorton Letters*. How interesting they are! I have just been writing the opening pages of a review of them. Wordsworth and Dorothy are exquisite in their simple pleasures, and happiness in one another.—Yours always,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

'2 UPPER TERRACE,
'HAMPSTEAD, *Friday, May 25*, 1888.

'MY DEAR CAMPBELL,—Am I, or am I not, on the brink of a discovery? You remember that letter of Lamb's to Taylor the Publisher (July 30, 1821), in which he tells the origin of his signature "Elia." He says that the Italian of that name, in the South Sea House with him, was an *author* as well as a "Scrivener." I find in Allibone the following entry:—

'"Ellia, Felix. *Norman Banditti, or the Fortress of Constance: a Tale*. London, 1799. 2 vols. 12 mo."

'Was this the man? The date corresponds precisely, and the curious fact that Lamb, after writing the name *Elia*, takes the precaution to add "call it *Ell-ia*," looks as if he remembered the pronunciation and had forgotten the spelling!

'Some day when you are at the British Museum, it might be worth looking in the Catalogue if the name occurs in connection with the novel above mentioned, or any others.

'I hope you found your way and your train last evening without let and hindrance. What a day it was!—Ever yours,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

NOTE BY MR. DYKES CAMPBELL.

'Neither book nor author's name in B. M. Catalogue. There is an Elia—but he was really Fra Elias (of Cortona?).'

In the spring of 1888, the *Letters* were completed, and an Elian revel seemed a fitting consummation of Ainger's labours. His good friend and colleague, Dykes Campbell, who had helped him not only with counsel but with his own collection of Lamb's letters, proposed to give a banquet in his honour, and he and Ainger determined that the bill of fare should consist only of the dishes that Charles Lamb had mentioned—

with appropriate quotations for each, which Ainger undertook to find. The plan was after his heart, and he threw himself into it with youthful fervour—so much so, indeed, that the *menu* as he first composed it was beyond the compass of mortal cook, and Mrs. Campbell had to beg him to curtail it.

'2 Upper Terrace,
'Hampstead, *Thursday Evening, March* 15, 1888.

'My dear Campbell.—You are both of you very good to me. I have amended the Bill of Fare, as suggested, putting in LAMB Cutlets, with a motto that will, I *hope*, strike you as ingenious when you see it. I have not thought it necessary to omit the quotation about Apple Dumplings—though there will be none in the *menu*—because it serves as a motto for child-like and innocent tastes generally. Moreover, when it is complained that the delicacy in question has no place on the *Carte*, you shall reply that you could not with any decency place any guest in the position of *refusing to take any*, with C.'s remark staring them in the face. I have not otherwise altered the original scheme, and am sending it off to-night to George Craik to see it carried out for me. Alfred Ainger.'

MENU.

29 Albert Hall Mansions,
Tuesday, March 20, 1888.

That enough is as good as a Feast. Not a man, woman, or child in ten miles round Guildhall, who really believes this saying. The inventor of it did not believe it himself. It was made in revenge by somebody, who was disappointed of a regale. It is a vile cold scrag-of-mutton sophism; a lie palmed upon the palate which knows better things.—*Popular Fallacies.*

CLEAR SOUP.

When I have sat, a *rarus hospes*, at rich men's tables, with the savoury soup. . . .—*Grace before Meat.*

FISH.

'I, too, never eat but one thing at dinner,' was his reply—then, after a pause, 'reckoning fish as nothing.'—*Ellistoniana.*

BRAWN.

Brawn was a noble thought. It is not every common gullet-fancier that can properly esteem of it. As Wordsworth sings of a

modest poet, 'You must love him ere to you he will seem worthy of your love'; so Brawn, you must taste it, ere to you it will seem to have any taste at all.—*Letter to Manning.*

The cool malignity of mustard and vinegar.—*Letter to Manning.*

LAMB CUTLETS

(WITH GREEN PEAS).

'Perchance some shepherd, on Lincolnian plains,
In manners guileless as his own sweet flocks,
Received thee first amid the merry mocks
And arch allusions of his fellow swains;
. . . . . .
Whate'er the fount whence thy beginnings came,
No deed of mine shall shame thee, gentle name.'

Lamb's Sonnet on 'The Family Name.'

ROAST PIG.

Of all the delicacies in the whole *mundus edibilis,* I will maintain it to be the most delicate—*princeps obsoniorum.*—*A Dissertation upon Roast Pig.*

ROAST CAPON, WITH SALAD.

'Tame villatic fowl.'
She was to sup off a roast fowl,—O joy to Barbara!

Barbara S.

SWEETS.

STEWED FIGS—WINE JELLY.

C. holds that a man cannot have a pure mind who refuses apple dumplings. I am not certain but he is right.—*Grace before Meat.*

Do take another slice, Mr. Billet, for you do not get pudding every day.—*Poor Relations.*

DESSERT.

Pineapple is great. She is, indeed, almost too transcendent—a delight, if not sinful, yet so like to sinning that really a tender-conscienced person would do well to pause.—*Dissertation on Roast Pig.*

He ate walnuts better than any man I know.—*Letter to Rickman.*

WINES.

PORT, SHERRY, CLARET.

After all, our instincts may be best. Wine, I am sure, good mellow generous Port, can hurt nobody.—*Letter to Coleridge.*

The dinner went off with brilliance, and Ainger brought a little bust of Lamb that he possessed to preside in the middle of the table.

That summer was enlivened by another kind of festivity—one of those literary 'frisks' of which Ainger was so fond. This time it was to Nether Stowey and the Quantocks, the country of Coleridge and Wordsworth in their early days, haunted also by Charles and Mary Lamb, who visited the Wordsworths at Alfoxden in 1797. The notes that follow tell the story of Ainger's plans, made in concert with Dykes Campbell, who was this time to be his boon companion—and what, indeed, could be fitter than that the biographers of Coleridge and of Lamb should visit this region in company? They were to start from Bristol, where Ainger was in Residence, and whence the letters are dated.

'Richmond House,
'Clifton Hill, *July* 18, 1888.

'I am very glad you are collecting information about the Stowey neighbourhood. Failing "Kilve's delightful shore" might not Watchet be our head-quarters? According to Murray there is a comfortable little Hotel there, and I confess that a good *base of operations* is half the battle in such cases.

'Whatever we finally decide on, I think we should come to terms with "mine Host" (as the country newspapers say) *early*—for the Monday (the 6th) being a Bank Holiday, I fancy that week, holiday-makers may be much about. . . .'

'*July* 30.

'I will have a small hamper of wine packed—two or three bottles of claret—one of sherry, and perhaps a few extras—to keep us up during our first week. (Fancy paying "Corkage" at the *Ship* at Porlock Weir!)

'Oh! that we may have decent weather next week! Hitherto it has been "*just redeek-lus.*" We have been here four weeks, and I am sure have not had four days without rain—and that mostly drenching and persistent in character. It made us pale with envy to hear of the fine days at Hastings.

'. . . I can back your story of the "H dropping," by one of my dear predecessor in our Chapter, Canon Sydney Smith, who said of

a Quaker's meeting, the stillness was so complete,—"you might have heard the Three-per-cents fall an eighth."—Yours always,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

'*Monday*—Go to Dunster, driving about 15 miles, where sleep.

'*Tuesday*—Drive from Dunster to Porlock Weir, about 10 miles. Sleep at Porlock.

'*Wednesday*—

'*Thursday*—Go to Lynton by trap or Coach. Sleep at Lynton.

'*Friday*—Coach 9.30 A.M. to Ilfracombe, thence to Bristol, or Coach at noon to Barnstaple; in either case, Bristol would be reached at 6.45 P.M.'

'RICHMOND HOUSE,

'CLIFTON HILL, BRISTOL, *August* 3, 1888.

'MY DEAR CAMPBELL,—You will see from the enclosed card that an equipage will be in waiting at Bridgwater Station to convey the distinguished Travellers to Over Stowey on Thursday afternoon.

'(I have ordered, by the way, the *Times* to be posted to us daily the first week of our tour, from my own newsagent at Hampstead.) I shall take my Murray's *Somersetshire*; a *Lyrical Ballads*, and other comforts. Bring you, what you think additionally useful. The weather is at last really splendid and the glass high and steady, so I cannot but be hopeful that we shall have a "fine spell" in Somersetshire. . . .

'I shall write to-morrow to Mrs. Morgan and order dinner at 7 o'clock at the Cottage—some good mutton of the country, and fruit tart!'

The trip was altogether successful. They 'took their ease' at their cottage; they saw for the first time haunts that had long been familiar to them. And 'they visited the place where Wordsworth read his tragedy to Coleridge and Charles Lloyd, and voted, on Ainger's motion, unanimous approval of Thelwall's statement "that it was a spot to make one forget all the jarrings of the world."'[1]

Canon Ainger's correspondence about Lamb did not cease with the appearance of his book. 'There is,' he wrote to one of his readers, 'a great bond among all lovers of Lamb, more than I think is felt in the case of any other writer of that

[1] Preface by Leslie Stephen to Dykes Campbell's *Life of Coleridge*.

class; and one of the pleasantest results of my having undertaken his life and works has been the communications it has brought me from fellow-students like yourself.' Between 1888 and 1892, he received many letters containing emendations and suggestions that might prove useful for fresh editions. And as a few of his answers to these may be thought of general interest, we give them here in order of time, from the end of 1888, onwards.

'Prospect House,
'Clifton Hill, Bristol, *Dec.* 18, 1888.

'. . . I am writing to —— to say that I am *amazed*—simply! at his criticisms—and that the complaint he is suffering from is not colour-blindness but *total cataract* of both eyes! Literally, I am going to use these words, and if he likes to resent it, *he may*.

'Here is a nice Christian Spirit to be displayed by a Dignitary of the Church on the very eve of Christmas! But there are certain vermin, as my dear and honoured Predecessor in this Chapter used to say, for whom the small tooth-comb is the only remedy.

'No more—for anything else would be an anti-climax.—Yours always, Alfred Ainger.'

The following letter needs the explanation which Mr. Gosse has kindly supplied:—

'In 1888,' he says, 'in connection with a study on Leigh Hunt which I was preparing, I was told by Robert Browning that the famous letter in *The Examiner*, which described the Prince Regent as a "fat Adonis of sixty," and for which Leigh Hunt was imprisoned for two years (1813-15) in Surrey Gaol, was really written by Charles Lamb, although Hunt took the responsibility.[1] The curious thing was that Browning thought he remembered that it was Leigh Hunt himself who had revealed this secret to him, and he urged me to divulge it to the public, as the time had come. But, under the pressure of cross-examination, the evidence became vaguer, and I was prudent enough to state the circumstances with reserve. Even so, however, it excited instant protest, and Ainger, in particular, refused to believe it. He wrote, as others did, to the *Athenæum* on the subject, but gently, in order not to wound Browning's feelings. Curiously enough, it

[1] See *Life of Charles Lamb*, by E. V. Lucas, vol. i. p. 322.

appeared that John Forster had long ago made the same statement in confidence to some one, and both Ainger and I came at last to the conclusion that Browning's memory, which in 1888 was not what it had been, was somewhat at fault, and that what he recollected was an echo of this idea of Forster's.'

'2 Upper Terrace, Hampstead,
'*Wednesday morning, March* 13, 1889.

'Dear Mr. Gosse,—When I spoke to Austin Dobson on Monday I had already sent off a "note and query" to the *Athenæum*, my only object being to get, if possible, at the foundation of this strange report. I perfectly understood that it did not originate with *you*. Charles Kent, whom I met last week at the Athenæum, was my informant; and he told me, quite correctly, that the story was traceable back through Browning to John Forster. If those two great authorities knew the fact, it must certainly have been known to many besides.

'Frankly, I confess that I think the story incredible. (1) because Leigh Hunt in his autobiography says, in terms, that he was himself the *writer* of the article (contrasting his own greater responsibility with that of his brother, who was only guilty as *publisher*); and (2) because the style of the article is so utterly unlike any style that Lamb ever wrote in his life. Turn to the long extract from the article given in Hunt's autobiography and I feel sure you will agree with me.

'I had a hope (forlorn, I admit) of "drawing" Browning—but if not, of eliciting confirmation, or the opposite, from some other of Hunt's surviving friends.—Yours very truly,

'Alfred Ainger.'

To Mr. Dykes Campbell.

'The Glade, Branch Hill,
'Hampstead, *Nov.* 4, 1889.

'My dear Campbell,—Many thanks—yes! my copy of Fitz-Gerald's *Crabbe* tallies closely with yours—no Title Page—only a Half-Title. It has got Wordsworth's *Brothers* (on the last page of preface) corrected in the margin in the old man's hand to *Borderers*.

'As to Prince Doricus I know nothing—and even have not a copy at hand, though it is in the *2nd Poetry for Children* (complete work) by Shepherd. I think these child-books of Lamb never engaged my attention much. I wish I could have helped

you. There has lately come into my hands *The Fortunate Blue-Coat Boy*, the school classic mentioned by Lamb in his second paper on Christ's Hospital. It is a queer book (a sort of romance *à la* Fielding of a "Blue" who marries a rich young widow), and as I have promised to write something short for a newspaper to be published during the Glasgow University Bazaar, I am going to make a little paper out of the odd little romance. It was published anonymously in 1770. Who wrote it? I did not get Lloyd's *Poems to his Grandmamma.* I bid up to 10s., but some one else wanted it—and got it for 13s. or 14s.

'In very great haste, Yours ever, ALFRED AINGER.'

'Poor —— gets it again hot (though his book is cold by this time). In the *Guardian*, of all places. I originally asked L. to let me review the book for him (this was before it appeared). I was glad afterwards that my request was not granted. I hope poor —— won't set *this* notice down to my account. It is a contemptible review, but managed to say that —— has no form or method, and all the old, old truisms.'

'*Dec.* 12, 1889.

'I will send you my little paper on the *Fortunate Blue-Coat Boy* when it appears next week in the Bazaar news (Glasgow). The publication is really an advertisement sheet (designed to bring in money), but it will contain each day, I believe, some original contribution. Andrew Lang begged off, at first, but afterwards kindly repented, and sent them a poem, I understand. I hope the poor lads will have a great success, and that they have laid aside the Battering Ram and washed their hands.'

'RICHMOND HOUSE, CLIFTON HILL,
'BRISTOL, *August* 26, 1890.

'MY DEAR CAMPBELL,—Your Budget did indeed rejoice me, and you *are* the true and original Literary Samaritan, of which all others are counterfeits. Last year Mrs. Sandford[1] wrote and told me of the Lamb Letter, and undertook to try and get me a sight of it; but not hearing again on the subject, I naturally thought the Wordsworths did not care that it should be seen, and so I put the matter from me. And so much greater is now the surprise. It is a

[1] A descendant of Tom Poole's, the friend of Coleridge and Wordsworth. Mrs. Sandford was the author of *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, a book much loved by Canon Ainger.

marvellously funny letter. I read it (must I confess the truth?) before I had read more than a few lines of yours—and as I read on and on, I said to myself, "Hullo! there's something wrong *somewhere*—this is George Dyer, not George Burnett." It was perhaps natural of Gordon Wordsworth and Mrs. Sandford to make the mistake, for they don't know the true and veritable "George" as you and I know him. The beauty of it is that it all falls in with and completes all the other accounts of George in the Rickman Letters, now in our possession. Unless I am much mistaken, there is an allusion in one of those letters to George Dyer coming to dinner every day, sparing his shilling, which confirms this new letter, and might have fixed the date, if your sagacious point of Southey being with Rickman in Dublin at the time had not also fixed it independently. I hope some day that the Wordsworths will allow it to take its place with the rest of the Rickman correspondence in some new Edition of the Letters.

'You will be amused with the enclosed[1]—the latest from the home of the setting-sun. I have written to tell Mr. Newton that his "find" is not much of a "find," for the "Lines to a Quid of Tobacco" are Southey's, and are to be found in any collected edition of his poems. I can't remember whether they are in the Annual anthology (and I am away from my books), but I rather think *not*. I have told him that I would mention his letter to you, who are well versed in Mr. Cosen's Manuscripts—now dispersed, I suppose.

'Still wet, cold, stormy weather. Indeed, I think the "spigot's oot a'thegither."

'Yes, —— is uneasy and miserable whenever he isn't *Boss*. He would have "*Boss* locutus est" on the Title of all his books. Have you read the replies to Besant in the last two *Guardians*? Oh my! *I* am giving them a taste this week.

'Best regards and thanks.—Ever yours, A. Ainger.'

'The Glade, Branch Hill,
'Hampstead, *Feb.* 11, 1891.

'My dear Campbell,—... Thanks for the Lamb verses which are not very remarkable, but everything he writes has a touch of its own. . . . What do you think, *candidly*, of the Lamb memorial-

[1] The only interesting thing in Mr. Newton's enclosure is a statement that Mr. E. D. North, of Scribner's, New York, is engaged on a Lamb bibliography.

window scheme? I have suggested to Mr. Duncombe that the church (in London) that has most *right* to any such memorial is St. Andrew's, Holborn, where Lamb's father, mother, and aunt lie buried; and in which parish they were all living when the disaster occurred. What do you think? I do not see that Lamb touched St. Margaret's, Westminister, at any one point.—Yours ever,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

'THE GLADE, BRANCH HILL,
HAMPSTEAD, *Feb.* 19, 1891.

'MY DEAR CAMPBELL,—If you did but know the tortures I have suffered for some weeks past from *conscience* (a sort of chronic moral Dyspepsia) at my neglect of you—you would indeed be full of pity! I am now shedding tears for my past misconduct ("Pepper Caster again," as Mr. Swiveller used to write to his indignant aunt). . . .

'No! I heard nothing about the feathers, except that I remember the sign in Holborn. Featherstone Buildings was a familiar landmark to me in childhood. Passing from John Street, Bedford Row, where I lived from about 1842 to 1849, one entered Holborn, I remember, always by that narrow thoroughfare.

'I am pretty well in general health, but my ailment does not go away. My voice keeps particularly strong, thank God—and my Temple ministrations have been more successful to my own thinking than usual of late. I have had little leisure for literature; I have lectured once or twice to the young ladies at Newnham—last Saturday, among others. I am to give one of the Friday evening discourses at the Royal Institution in April. I have chosen for my subject "Euphuism Past and Present"—which will enable me to speak my mind very freely on some symptoms of literature in our age.

'When are you coming to town?—talking is so much sweeter than writing, and so much easier. I shall perhaps offer myself to you for a day or two by and by—may I?—Yours ever,

'ALFRED AINGER.

'So Emma Isola is gone!'

'THE GLADE, BRANCH HILL,
'HAMPSTEAD, *Feb.* 25, 1891.

'MY DEAR CAMPBELL,—Delighted to hear the news! Expect me on Monday (life and health permitting) at 1.30. I have a variety of things to do in town, later in the day, and it suits me perfectly.

So glad to know you are "giving it hot" to Martin ("one Martin does not make a summer"—but you 'll make it very "summery" for Martin), though the Review is certain to be set down to me, or Kent, or some other "malicious Rival"! All talk when we meet.—Yours always, A. AINGER.'

'THE GLADE, BRANCH HILL,
'HAMPSTEAD, *Feb.* 27, 1891.

'MY DEAR CAMPBELL,—Many thanks for the MSS. which I have read with great interest. Your allusions to me are so generous and over-appreciative (as you always are) that I hardly like to make one discordant criticism; but I *do* think you use the "bludgeon" too much in your reviews of things you dislike. . . .

'Please forgive me. I have all the instinct of "bludgeoning" myself, but I am certain it is impolitic: for it leaves the casual reader under the impression that the reviewer is either a personal enemy of the writer, or else a rival writer on the subject (neither of which, in this case, you are), and so he goes his way, and sets no store by the Review—and so Martin gets off:—

"Judex damnatur quum nocens absolvitur."—*Edinburgh Review* (*passim*).'

'RICHMOND HOUSE, CLIFTON HILL,
'BRISTOL, *July* 30, 1891.

'MY DEAR CAMPBELL,—Forgive me yet once more—*so* full of letter-writing and of much else is this month of July at Bristol. After this week everything will be quiet and dull. From Monday next I have the inside of two weeks free from Cathedral work, for we close for cleaning, and I wish we were once more going to roam in the Quantocks. Very many thanks for the schoolboy verses of Lamb, so interesting from their reminiscences of his Horace, and also his Gray and his Collins. I think I never *saw* them before, but I have surely read of their existence somewhere—perhaps in that old volume, *Lamb and his Friends*, by P. Fitzgerald. They will at once go into the Lamb "Stock-pot"—my Commonplace Book, which contains some very curious "odds and ends."'

['*Later Summer* 1891.]

'. . . I have not told you that I have got some Charles Lamb Relics from Mrs. Tween's Executors—the little plaster head of

Samuel Salt, and the *Poems on Various Occasions*, by John Lamb. They did not go to Sotheby's with the books, and I asked the Executors to part with them to me privately. I am having the little *head* mounted and framed by a very clever wood-carver here, and with a little silver plate underneath with the quotation from the account of "Lovel" in the *Old Benchers of the Inner Temple.*

'I will indeed try to see you in your own *not* "detestable" "Cinque Port"[1] before Christmas comes. . . .

'How gets on the one-volume Coleridge?

'In great haste, with best regards.—Yours always,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

Among the elucidatory letters kept by Canon Ainger none is more interesting than a note from Algernon Swinburne concerning Elia's essay on *George Wither*, and that on the *Tragedies of Shakespeare*:—

'THE PINES,
'PUTNEY HILL, S.W., *May* 26.

'DEAR MR. AINGER,— . . . "Nott! it is not!!" does not occur anywhere. At the close of Lamb's prefatory note to the section of Wither's "Motto" headed "Nec curo," Nott has had the impertinence to write "This should be re-written, with more simplicity." To which Lamb has subjoined—"It should *not*, Nott!—C. L."; afterwards adding (as above) in pencil, "Nott!"[2]

'The "improver of Shakespeare" mentioned on p. 396[3] was

[1] 'I love town or country; but this detestable Cinque Port is neither.'—'The old Margate Hoy'—written from Hastings—*Essays of Elia* (Macmillan), p. 243.

[2] Mr. Swinburne possesses 'an interleaved copy of Wither's *Philarete* and other poems, edited and printed by Lamb's friend and old schoolfellow, John Matthew Gutch, at his private press at Bristol. Lamb made comments and criticisms on the blank leaves (which later 'formed the matter of one of his papers') and returned the volumes to Gutch, who sent them on to Dr. G. F. Nott, the editor of Surrey and Wyatt's poems. Dr. Nott added his quota of corrections and suggestions, and the volumes once more found their way into the hands of Lamb, who proceeds (*more suo*) to criticise the last interloper with the utmost freedom of language. . . . The necessity for continually differing from this rival critic finds abundant scope for grim jest in connection with his opponent's surname.'—Ainger's Notes on *Poems, Plays, and Miscellaneous Essays* (Macmillan), p. 399-400.

[3] 'I now come,' wrote Lamb, 'to the London Acting Edition of *Macbeth* of the same date, 1678, . . . from which I made a few rough extracts when I visited the British Museum for the sake of selecting from the "Garrick Plays."

his self-styled bastard, Sir William Davenant. The monstrous alteration of *Macbeth* there described by Lamb has been reprinted in H. H. Furness's "Variorum" edition of Shakespeare's play—Philadelphia, 1874. In common with all Lamb-lovers, I am very much obliged to you for the reproduction of that most interesting letter to the *Spectator*[1]—an exquisite novelty. Allow me, nevertheless—or rather all the more—on that account, to enter my strongest protest against your making Lamb mis-spell the name of Shakespeare—which, if I am not much mistaken, he always spelt as its bearer did on the title-pages of both the books he published, and at the foot of the dedication of either. If people prefer to talk or write about Chaxpur and Meltun, let them; but let them abstain, in the name of accuracy, from representing Lamb or Coleridge as the student of Chaxpur or Shakspere, or Marvell as the friend and panegyrist of Meltun.—Yours very truly, AL. SWINBURNE.'

In 1891, Mr. Lee asked Canon Ainger to contribute articles upon Charles and Mary Lamb to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and they were ready early in the new year. To them the next note refers, while the fragment that follows it belongs to a rather later date:—

'THE GLADE, BRANCH HILL,
'HAMPSTEAD, *Jan.* 26, 1892.

'DEAR MR. LEE,—I send you herewith (very tardily, I fear) my life of Charles Lamb. I am of course a novice at dictionary work, and may have erred, by excess or defect, in a hundred ways. Please tell me what to amend, and I will endeavour to succeed better. I have avoided criticism, almost entirely, as I gather from the articles in the dictionary, generally is your custom. I have also avoided, I trust, rhetoric or fine writing. Perhaps after glancing at the article in MS. you will tell me what you think about *Mary Lamb*. I feel that after referring readers to the present article, a page or two more would amply suffice for her, the two lives being so bound together, and having so few incidents apart.—Yours truly, ALFRED AINGER.'

As I can scarcely expect to be believed upon my own word as to what our ancestors at that time were willing to accept for Shakspere, I refer the reader to that collection to verify my report.'—Ainger's Notes on *Poems, Plays, and Miscellaneous Essays* (Macmillan), p. 396.

[1] Ainger's Notes in the same volume, pp. 394-395.

To Mr. Sidney Lee.

'1894.

'The letter is not very distinctly and *unquestionably* Lamb's; but it may well be his. When he was reckless in his humour, and allowed himself to revel in sheer nonsense, his fun is so protean that it is dangerous to say that any outburst is unlike him.

'In the writing of a serious letter, or quasi-serious, I think I could safely undertake to detect the spurious Lamb from the true. . . .—Yours most truly, Alfred Ainger.'

Here too belongs a letter to Mr. Gosse, written as late as 1900, but falling into due place here, since it concerns Lamb's *Letters*. It forms no unfitting close to the correspondence dealing with Canon Ainger's work on Elia.

To Mr. Gosse.

Master's House, Temple, E.C.
March 31, 1900.

'My work has largely consisted of transferring matter from the *Notes* to the *Text*, as you quite rightly suggest. I have thus removed any number of Letters and Notes which in the previous edition had reached me too late to put in their proper place. . . . So deal mercifully with me, my dear Gosse, and do not, "as some ungracious pastors do," quote my peccadillos as if they proved my principle of action, instead of my temporary and accidental departure from it. . . . Please read my short (new) Preface to Vol. I.[1] Have you noticed two new Letters in which Lamb romances to amuse or startle his correspondents? One to Gutch (Law Stationer), telling how the office-boy had run off with the cash-box. Another showing how he (Lamb) had been arrested at Enfield on a charge of murder.'

[1] Edition de luxe.

CHAPTER XV

LETTERS

1892-1896

After the autumn of 1892, Ainger's life again saw changes. In that year he resigned the Readership at the Temple, the post that he had held for six-and-twenty years. His bad health, emphasised by a chronic catarrh, had for some time past been leading him to think of such a step. 'I am,' he wrote in 1891, 'in great straits as to what to do. I must, unless I get rid of this ailment, give up either my Canonry *or* the Readership of the Temple and get a long holiday. And yet while my old Dean (at 91) lies an invalid, and does not die, I don't want to give him a single fresh anxiety! And so I wait on, expecting, "till something shall turn up," or some direction of affairs show me how to act. If I *could* but get a change of Canonry to some more bracing part of England—but when a man's *in possession of* something, no Dealers in Patronage imagine we *can* want anything more.'

A few months later, after the decision was made, he gives his reasons for it to Horace Smith.

'Dear old Vaughan,' he says, 'is very good, and I know he loves me well—and we have been always very close friends. I did not want to *survive* him at the Temple, and yet it would have seemed unmannerly to *wait* till he resigned, and then send in my own resignation. I strongly feel that he will not be much longer with you. I am grieved to leave London, but hope to return some day. What I much desire is a change of Canonry—and to Westminster if it might be. There might be a vacancy there any moment, but I haven't much influence with old Gladstone or any of his crew.'

And again in December, he writes to Archdeacon Bather:

'. . . I think I was quite right to leave the Temple. I had been there long enough, and Vaughan, though at first genuinely distressed, came round to see it and to approve. He feels that he himself may not remain in office much longer—and he said that I could not well stay on till he resigned, and then leave. It would have looked too marked, and not been respectful or kind to the Temple authorities. People are very kind in what they say everywhere, and I have most charming letters from all ranks from the Judges downward. . . .'

He could not thus give up his post without some definite plan for the future, and after much consideration he accepted, on trial, the college living of St. Edward's, Cambridge. There were many reasons for his choice—the congenial surroundings; the neighbourhood of old friends; leisure for literary pursuits, the parish being small and prosperous.

'I am coming,' he tells Mr. Loder, 'to be a nearer neighbour of yours. I have accepted the little living of St. Edward's in Cambridge (in the gift of my college, Trinity Hall)—and Cambridge will be my home, if life is spared, for a few years at least. Perhaps you will come over and see me some day, and take a dinner and bed. And Aldis Wright shall come and meet you.

'My Canton Jar[1] will accompany me wherever I go, and is one of the most cherished of my possessions.

'I shall have many Lamb autographs and relics to show you.'

Meanwhile the wrench from the Temple was hard, nor could he bear to speak of it. 'Enclosed,' he writes to a friend, 'please find (as the commercial gents say), two orders for the Temple. . . . Odd and sad—it may be my last Sunday there—but expect no Farewell Sermons from me. To begin with, I should break down and could not face the ordeal.'

'I am very low and sad about leaving the Temple, as you may guess,' he writes again to Horace Smith; 'but Vaughan seems to look forward with pleasure to making me his deputy sometimes when he is away at Llandaff, and this comforts me very much—for I have struck my roots very deep there, I find.'

[1] See chapter xiii. p. 232.

He had to begin work at Cambridge in some discomfort, for he had as yet no home there. 'I have not,' he writes, 'found a tenant for this house, and I cannot afford to take another good house in Cambridge until I do. Nor do I mean to dismantle this house for the present. I am taking a couple of rooms over one of the shops in King's Parade, like a gay undergraduate, and am going backwards and forwards for Sundays. There are no Poor in the Parish, so that I am not wronging any one very much. What I shall ultimately do, if I fail to let this house here, I can't say. Between you and me, great efforts will, I believe, be made to get me a London Canonry some day—but the prospect is of course chancy. If the Conservatives were in, I think it would come all right. But keep this to yourselves, please.'

The house at Cambridge was never taken, for the arrangement there came to an end. In his considerations, he had left out one great drawback to his appointment, that he was not cut out to be a parish clergyman and would probably not have settled down to it. But in this case matters were taken out of his hands when he had only been six weeks at St. Edward's; for early in 1893, the doctors ordered him a long holiday abroad as the only real cure for his complaint. His letters alone show how frequently he suffered from bodily distress—generally proceeding, as he said, 'from that troublesome organ, the liver—"To Greece (and all other countries) the direful spring of woes unnumbered."' It happened that a young Bristol friend of his, an invalid, Mr. Daniel Cave, had been recommended to try a voyage to Egypt, and it was speedily arranged that the two should join forces. Directly the scheme was fixed, Ainger was as delighted as a boy. Mr. Cave was already endeared to him by his sweetness and courage in suffering, as well as by his love of books—a love which Ainger had long fostered in him as a great resource in illness. They were used to one another's company. They were to have entire rest and to be a long time away. The very few letters that remain have a holiday ring about them.

To Mr. du Maurier.

'Nile Steamer, "Rameses the Great,"
'on the Nile, five days from Cairo,
'*February* 26, 1893.

'My dear Kicky,—I am bold enough to think that you and yours will not be displeased to have some tidings of me at first hand. And first you will be glad to hear that everything has prospered with my friend and myself thus far, and that we have had fine weather, and first-rate sea-passages throughout. We travelled straight through (sleeping-cars) from London to Naples, by Paris, Mont Cenis, and Rome—and then rested in the beautiful Bay, with Vesuvius all a-smoke, for four or five days, with Pompeii and Baiae and other sacred spots engaging our attention all round. Thence across the Peninsula to Brindisi, and so by Austrian-Lloyds' Steamer to Alexandria and Cairo. Of all the delights and splendours whereof more, I trust, when we meet on many a sunny afternoon in May on Hampstead Heath. We have come upon many English friends and acquaintances, but have not made any new ones of any quality. We are in a first-rate Steamer (one of Mr. Cook's), with every luxury and comfort, and only some thirty-five passengers, the boat being constructed to take twice that number, so that we are not crowded, and life is very easy. Of the thirty-five, only about half are English speaking, of these a few are Scotch, and a few American. There are some rare specimens of the British Philistine. We heard something to-day that we thought might suit *you*. A very gentlemanly young Dane, on board, was confiding to a very vulgar Englishwoman that he found such difficulty in the pronunciation of certain English letters, especially the "R." She expressed much sympathy, but added, "You surprise me. I should have thought our 'H' would have been much more difficult for you." (She probably spoke from bitter personal experience!)

'I have been to the Pyramids, and penetrated to the interior of the big one—to the King's Chamber—where the sarcophagus of Cheops still remains. Three stalwart Bedouin Arabs hoisted and pulled and pushed me through the difficult passages, and as I was nearly out again, very much perspiring, one addressed me, and said, "You know Mark Twain's book? Yes?" So that you see our great English and American humorists are doing their civilising work even in the Deserts of Libya. The same as another Bedouin, who was our Cicerone for the day, and had a

number of cards on which our predecessors had written friendly words as to his qualities as Guide. He shewed me one of the last he had received, and which he seemed much to value. He asked me if I knew the gentleman in England. I took the card and read "Mr. Clement Scott." I told him that that was his Arabic name, but that in England we pronounced it "T-ommy R-t." I have no doubt that the columns of the *Daily Telegraph* have long ago sounded the praises, and described the dress and bearing of our friend "Isa Abdul," for such was his name.

'I hope you and your dear ones are all well and thriving, and that your Irish journey was pleasant and prosperous, and brought you both money and friends, and a store of good Irish stories. I have not seen the last two *Punches*, and every Tuesday I am perfectly miserable. If you should be bursting with a desire to write me a line or two, address "Care of T. Cook & Sons, Cairo, Egypt." Best love and regards to all, your ever faithful,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

To Miss THOMPSON.

'HÔTEL D'ANGLETERRE,
'ATHENS, *Sunday, March* 19, 1893.

'. . . But oh, my dearest Mary, I cannot even attempt to describe to you the beauty and the inspiration of this city, which it has been the dream of my life to behold. I have just been this afternoon, for the second time, to the Areopagus, and stood again on the very spot where St. Paul stood, on the slope of the hill, with the Athenians before him, and the whole city lying at his feet—the most superb panorama—, with the mountains beyond and around, and the Parthenon and other temples to his right and left. It is the loveliest, most touching spectacle my eyes ever beheld—and I am most thankful to have been spared to see it. I went to church, like a good Englishman, this morning, but all through the sermon I was listening to St. Paul on the neighbouring hill, and hearing him quote Menander about "We also" being "His offspring."'

After two months' absence, he returned much the better for his trip. He was very glad to be back in familiar surroundings. 'I am not happy in places where I do not get my letters and the newspaper,' he said. May and June passed pleasantly, and July saw him once again in Bristol. He did not lose many

days before resuming his relations with *Punch* and his correspondence with du Maurier. The letters continue as usual.

'Richmond House,
'Clifton Hill, Bristol, *July* 19, 1893.

'Why. Oh! WHY — does not my "Kicky" consult his "Chanoine" before he "does" a joke sent him? The "nothing to nobody" is as old as Hood, who tells the story (I *think*, for I am away from my books) in a note to some Papers of his on "Copyright." In any case he tells it as of some miserly old man, whose liberality is in question.

'*How* are the dear family at N.G. House? I have no news for them, save that I do my daily and weekly duties with meekness—and go out to dinner sometimes—and behave myself decorously to my fellow-man. . . . —Your own attached (though critical)

'A. Ainger.'

'Richmond House,
'Clifton Hill, Bristol, *Sept.* 15, 1893.

'My dear Kicky,—It is no use! I can hold out no longer!! I *must* have the original of the "Doocid fine Chappie!" and enclose what I believe to be the usual cheque. I have long been on the look-out for a "du Maurier," in his "*later*" period, and now I have hit it exactly. *Please* (if you will let me have it), let it be enclosed between two cardboards and forwarded to me *here*. I hope you have got my two last letters.—Your own and faithful, and admiring Canon,

Alfred Ainger.'

November found him back once more at the Glade, which happily had found no tenant.

'No, Mr. Ignoramus' (he wrote thence to du Maurier), 'it's a Latin Ode, and runs thus:—

'"Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hospes comesque corporis,
Quae nunc abibis in loca?"

'You see, dear Scholiast, that "abibis" being a verb of motion takes *in* with our *accusative* after it; note also that *loca* is a frequent alternative for *locos*—there being a form "locum," as well as "locus."

'(Were you only jocose,
You might use *locos*—
But being a joker,
You may rise to *loca*!)

'I shall not improbably lunch with you (in accordance with your sweet invitation) on Tuesday next.

'How are you after looking at ——'s drawing in this week's *Punch*—as well as can be expected?—Your own fondly attached,

'CANON.'

To MRS. SMITH.

'*Christmas*, 1893.

'. . . This is *the* most ungenial weather for Xmas I ever recollect, it is cold and damp, and windy, and gloomy—so sit with your back to the window while you read this and keep *one* eye on the fire; which reminds me of what Heinrich Heine said—"that ladies who write books always write with one eye on their Paper, and another on a *man*—except" (he added) "the Countess Hahn-Hahn, who had only one eye." Talking of the fire, you seem to have been breaking the record in conflagrations this week at Sheffield. A poor linen-draper too—I hope he is insured. I remember one night some years ago, from Hampstead Heath, looking forth upon a great Fire at Maple's, the Furniture people in Tottenham Court Road. I was unfeeling enough to quote Tennyson, "That Maple burn itself away!" (*In Memoriam*. Remind Smith to look it up.)

'This subject of puns reminds me of a very pretty edition of Hood's humorous Poems, Macmillan, published this Christmas, with some very charming illustrations by a new Artist, who was introduced to my notice by Dinham Atkinson. The Publishers asked me to write the Introduction, and if it falls in your way you may possibly (but not likely) recognise some sentences out of a lecture on Hood that I once gave at your Literary and Philosophical.

'Oh! you dislike Puns, do you? So do I generally—(see my Preface, *passim*). But sometimes one is irresistible. . . .

'As Artemus Ward used to say—"A joke now and then improves a comic paper," and it may also improve a Christmas Letter. . . .

'One piece of frivolity brings on another. Ah! I remember a Christmas years ago at the old Atkinsons' at Kingsley, a sad case of *one thing bringing on another*. I hope it won't occur again (history repeating itself) at your hospitable board. A poor young lady was taking a sausage from a dish handed round, to go with her turkey, but the sausage (alas!) had not been severed from its companion—nor the companion (Horror!) from the next one—

and so they poured on to her plate—like "linked sweetness long drawn out"—until she was ready to fall through the floor with nervousness and mortification. "One thing drawing on another" —Ah! my Brethren—how often—but I forget myself! . . .

'Be sure you answer all my questions when you write—and about your visit at *Birmingham,* and everything *concerning 'em,* and if every *Knyvett* is right as a *trivet,* and if dear *Katie* is in judgment more *weighty*—and if our dear *Lily* is *ever* known to be silly—alas! for the *Rhyme*—it has done me this *time*: but I hope her dear *Tom* will not judge me *therefrom*: I feared lest the *shock would* dismay every *Lockwood*—at this awful *profanity* as to dear Lily's *sanity.* (You will observe that I am in training for the Laureateship, which Mr. Gladstone has now decided that he will fill up at the opening of the coming Century). I wonder, by the way, if you heard what —— is reported to have said of the Grand Old Man: that he "combined the eloquence of a St. Paul with the—inaccuracy of an *Ananias.*"

'Inaccuracy is so curiously like "in a curacy" that I naturally begin to think of my dear godson Jim, who is, I trust, covering himself with glory—and reflecting some upon his godfather—in our University Town. It *is* a horrid climate and no mistake, and it had much to do with my not finally accepting St. Edward's. I hope the boy's health will not suffer. If it does, don't let him stay. It is so awfully depressing to some constitutions. Talking of *depressing*—there we go again—did you hear of the Stage Manager at the Lyceum drilling the Witches in the great Brocken Scene (Infernal Regions) in *Faust*? They came on hopping and skipping, and as merry as you like, when he sternly checked them—"*That won't do at all!* You musn't look *'appy*! you musn't look 'appy! You 're not on 'Ampstead 'Eath—you 're in 'Ell!" It was also at the Lyceum that one of the carpenters was one day seen hunting about for something, with a very discontented and melancholy air, and was heard to mutter—"Dear! dear! dear! everything 's gone wrong with me this week; I buried my wife yesterday—and now I can't find my bradawl anywhere!"

'But come, come, there are limits to this style of letter-writing, even at festal seasons, and this epistle is only too like the misdirected humour (so called) of those I used to write in the old, old days, before years had brought the philosophic mind. . . . So let me apologise for this temporary relapse into the childish gambols that once could please: and whatever you do — *don't forbid me your house,* for I shall take no notice if you do!

'God bless you, dear old friends. We all send love and regards and best wishes, and you *know*—so don't pretend you don't—that I am always,—Your affect^e and faithful, ALFRED AINGER.'

1894, which was to be so momentous a year for him, opened with a press of business.

'I hope you can forgive my great discourtesy in not sooner thanking you for the letter of Charles Lamb's that you were so kind as to send me some weeks since. The only excuse I can offer is an accidental and inevitable conflux of engagements that has been mine the last month. A visit to Bristol, for a chapter meeting, a visit to Manchester to lecture at Owens College, and stay with my old friend, A. W. Ward, a sermon at Oxford, and three lectures at the Royal Institution; these are among the "circumstances over which I have had no control," and I feel sure you will judge me gently.'

So he writes to Mr. Sidney Lee, his friend, and by now his editor, for Ainger had already written his article on Lamb in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. And the fragments that follow are addressed to the same correspondent.

'Has it ever occurred to you that Meres, in using the phrase "among his private friends," meant something more than that the Sonnets were still in manuscript? Does not the particularity of the phrase point to the fact that the Sonnets were in truth largely "pièces de circonstance," and were written at the request or suggestion of many and various friends who wanted expression given, in verse, to some incident or experience of their own?

'I was reading last night Charles Knight on the subject of begetter, etc. It strikes me that he is (for once) very acute. He is not in general very much of a commentator.

'Are you quite right in instancing "Shoal," for school, as a happy emendation of Theobald's? Are they not the same word originally, and did not mariners commonly talk of a "*School* of Porpoises," for instance? —— has not returned to the charge. I should say, with the American in the story, that I would not willingly call him, or any man, a "liar," but that if I met him walking down Waterloo Place arm in arm with Ananias *and* Sapphira, I should say it was quite a *family party*!' . . .

'*June* 14.

'I am so glad the dinner last week went off so successfully, and I thank you very much for mentioning my name among those who

most cordially recognise Mr. Smith's great services to English *History* in what he is doing. I noticed that my friend Bishop Creighton spoke of them as services "to *Literature*," but they are far more than that.'

In the early summer, Dean Vaughan's resignation of the Mastership was finally announced, and in June, Lord Rosebery offered the post to Alfred Ainger. He could not have found a fitter person for the office, nor one who delighted in it more.

'The Athenæum,
'*June* 28, 1894.

'Dear Horace (wrote the new Master to his old friend),—You must be among the first to hear that Lord Rosebery has offered me the Mastership, and that I have accepted it. . . .—Your ever affectionate, A. Ainger.'

The appointment gave universal satisfaction.

'Of Canon Ainger,' said the *Times*, 'we may almost say that he has become prominent in his own despite. So far has he been from unduly pushing himself to the front that he might be blamed, if at all, for keeping too much in the background. Lord Rosebery has been too keen-sighted for him, and has picked him out for the office which he is now to fill, and, we doubt not, to adorn. His appointment is a recognition.'

And in all the letters that he had from friends and strangers the refrain is the same, only warmer. 'I think your appointment will be received in this way wherever you are known, since where you are known you are beloved.' These words from one of the notes epitomise the general opinion.

Ainger's summer migration to his Canonry and the closing of the Temple for vacation prevented his immediate assumption of his new duties. It is from Bristol that he writes the next letter, again to Horace Smith (whose son had been distinguishing himself)—and the rest follow in due sequence.

'Richmond House,
'Clifton Hill, Bristol, *July* 16, 9 A.M.'

'Dear Horace,—My warmest congratulations to the dear boy, and to ALL!! I knew it! I knew it!! from the day he acted

umpire and declared me *out* (for stomach before wicket). I will write you further in a day or two. I am off to London for the day, so excuse haste. I never thanked you, dear H., for your own felicitations on the Mastership, but up to present moment have had 276 letters, and they take some time. What to CALL me, quotha?—

> "Call me Lalage or Chloris
> Perdita, Neæra, Doris!
> Only, only, call me THINE."
> (COLERIDGE, *not* the lamented chief.)

'Love to all, your ever own, A. A.'

To MR. GOSSE.

'RICHMOND HOUSE,
'CLIFTON HILL, BRISTOL, *July* 25, 1894.

'MY DEAR GOSSE,—I write this in case you should hear that I had been seen in London last Monday week, the very day of the Keats celebration. For as a fact I *was* up for one day—suddenly and unexpectedly, to see my *Dentist*—and I was in the hands of "kind heart" (as they called him euphemistically, in Shakespeare's day) at the very 'witching hour of 4 p.m., when your proceedings opened. So do not write me down perjured caitiff because I had previously refused your committee's flattering invitation.

'I read the report of all your sayings and doings with great interest, and in the main with great agreement, though to call 'Keats" one of the "loveablest" or most loved, of English poets, as Palgrave did, seems to me to argue great perversity of judgment, or infelicity of expression. I quite am with *you* in thinking Keats on the whole the most ideally "poetical" of poets, as regards expression, that ever lived.

'What I *do* think incongruous is putting him in a Church—which seems to me on a par with placing a bust of the "Judicious Hooker" (my eminent predecessor) in the *Parthenon*.

'For Johnny could not indeed be said so much to have "forgotten what the inside of a Church was like," as never to have made the discovery.

'Many thanks again for your telegram, one of the first in time, and certainly not one of the least valued, that I received. My friends have been very kind; nearly three hundred letters up to

last evening! and so little *Romance* about the thing—either for myself or my hearers—seeing that we have known one another for some eight and twenty years!—Ever yours,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

To MR. DU MAURIER (after the publication of *Trilby*).

'RICHMOND HOUSE,
'CLIFTON HILL, BRISTOL, *August* 14, 1894.

'DEAR KICKY,—I yearn for news of you and yours—but I don't deserve any, for I have so long neglected your charming letter. I have been very busy with Cathedral Work *and* with correspondence (arising out of the Mastership among other things), and am still much in arrears. Then we had a week of the Doctors (British Medical Association), and I preached to the Doctors, and dined with them, and met them at Garden Parties, and altogether had a high old time of it—and met many *old*, and made some nice *new* friends. More when we meet!

'I have been hoping to be able to write and say I had read *all Trilby*. But as yet I have only managed to get the first three numbers of Harper, but I have read these with astonishment and delight. In the scene in which Trilby first discovers that her calling (as *nude* model) is a shameful one, and does so through her love and respect for these Englishmen, you have reached a height that any novelist might envy. It is almost genius, and I *cried* over it in bed, when I read it. And moreover, dear boy, allow me to say that you there excelled yourself because you forgot—in the intensity of your own feelings—to be consciously witty and humorous. The fault of your style, I venture to say, is that the love of *persiflage* is too continuous—one longs *sometimes* for a repose. But for the vivacity and brightness of your descriptions and dialogue I have nothing but praise—and envy ("a little friendly envy, gentlemen," said Mr. Pell). I hope to get the remaining chapters in a few days, and shall eagerly read them. I rather dread the hypnotic portion—I care nothing for these things—and fear it may damage or discredit the verisimilitude of the other portions of the story.

'I wish I had some stories for you, but I have none. I hope soon to see Whitby appearing in *Punch*. Don't go tempting me with any more "Deuced fine chappies." That reminds me—how is the dear Gerald?

'*Punch* is wretchedly bad just now. . . . Guthrie's *forte* lies in

character and *dialogue*, not in plot-making or situation, I think. I read an interesting article on Phil May in the *Magazine of Art*, which was lent me. He is the *genius* among the coming men, I think. I have just bought two little water colour sketches here, by *Wimperis*. Do you know him? He has got great charm.

'I sometimes snigger at the comic column of our local press. For a taste!

(1) "Yes, the horse cost me £500, and you shall have it for fifty."

(*Suspicious friend.*) "That's rather a curious reduction, is it not?"

"Well, the fact is, it bolted one day, and killed my poor wife—and now I've no further use for it!"

(2) 'Two strangers contemplating "Niagara."

First S. "It seems a pity, does it not, Sir? this vast volume of water running thus uselessly away."

Second S. "You speak, Sir, I presume, as an Engineer."

First S. "No, Sir—as a Milkman!"

'Love to you all from self and nieces, yours affectionately,

'A. Ainger.'

To the Same.

'Richmond House,
'Clifton Hill, Bristol, *Sept.* 12, 1894.

'Dearest Kicky,— . . . There is not much news here. People are beginning to come back, and things are livelier. Moreover, the weather is really enchanting. The great Irving comes here next week, and I am actually trying to get stalls to see him in a new little one-act Piece by Conan Doyle, called the *Waterloo Veteran*. He plays the *Bells* also, which oddly enough I have never seen. "Ellen" is not with him this time—only "Marion."

'Well, I have finished *Trilby*. You know how little I care for the supernatural in Fiction—so I don't mind telling you that I *love* the first half of your book, and don't care for the second. Up to the "hypnotism" incidents, I think your story charming and beautifully true to nature and artistic—*after* that, as it seems to me, a pathetic and deeply interesting and credible story of real life degenerates into a Fairy-tale.

'I need not say that I don't care for your theological discussions, not because they are unorthodox, but because they seem to me irrelevant, and therefore inartistic; and the speech about "robbing me of my Saviour" should not have appeared at all.

It is a blot; again, not because of bringing a Sacred Name into a humorous story, but because it is *too* obviously *lugged in*, and therefore again an offence against art.

'All through, save in one or two of the best passages, you are, in my judgment, too perpetually upon the "humorous tiptoe." You are nowhere so excellent and so *strong*, as when you forget the persiflage-ic vein, and become serious. As I said in my last letter, the whole situation, and the conduct of Trilby after discovering by the love and esteem of those three good fellows that sitting for the nude is, to say the least, unwomanly—is just *admirable*—and so are the conversations of Little Billee's mother and uncle, when they beg Trilby to break the engagement. Trilby's death scene I am less pleased with. It seems to me too long, and would have been far more effective and pathetic if *half the length.* But for all that, when the book comes out in one volume form *with the Pictures*, I must have one, with an inscription from the talented author and dear friend.

'By the way, why do you draw Little Billee, almost to the life, from F. Walker, and then introduce F. Walker as a separate individual? Is this simply to perplex and hoax the gentle reader? *A propos de* F. W., I fear you will call me an extravagant dog, but I was tempted in our leading Art-shop here the other day, and bought an etching by Macbeth, from F. W., *A Rainy Day*—do you know it? Simply a dull bit of country town, with a pony cart, and two umbrellas—and roads streaming with water,—but oh! "the Poetry of it—the Poetry of it, Iago!" How thankful I am to you, Kicky, for having taught me, among other good things, to know good art when I see it—though, as you see, the knowledge is going far to land me in the Bankruptcy Court!

'I heard a story (to me) new, of Thompson of Trinity. He remarked, that of the ordinary Undergraduate it might perhaps be said, that he "hated knowledge for its own sake." . . . Love and blessings to you all, including Trixy and Charley. Your imbecile critic, but faithful friend, 'ALFRED AINGER.'

In the autumn he returned to London, and later, together with his family, moved into his new quarters. The dignified Master's House, so long already a home to him, was now to become really his. No other house in London would have made so fit a setting for his figure, and he never ceased to take pleasure in its four walls and all that surrounded them.

Henceforth his existence shaped itself, both in its work and its play, as it was to remain to the end. Money difficulties were by this time practically removed from his path, and the obligation to write or to lecture was no longer pressing. Thus, though the number of committees and public functions that devolved on him increased, the leisure that he had was more unburdened; and the hours that he spent in his library, the library of a loving reader rather than a collector, could now be times of pure enjoyment, unhampered by thoughts utilitarian. It was to the sermons which, in virtue of his office, he preached on Sunday mornings, that he now devoted his best literary powers, and more and more did they become the main object of his life. When he reappeared in the Temple pulpit as the Temple's Master, he felt considerable nervousness, as he tells us in the note that follows. The letters that succeed it take up as usual the thread of his daily impressions.

To Mr. Horace Smith.

'*November* 13, 1894.

'I greatly hope to meet you to-morrow at the Banquet—and if so, I want to save my credit by first thanking you for your most kind letter of last week. I know you to be a man of your word—and not given (any more than *I* am, I hope) to rave and gush—so I was the more grateful for your words about the sermon, which was indeed a *difficult* one, both to write and to deliver. I am greatly relieved that it is over, and that my kind friends are good enough to think I did not wholly fail. To-morrow's ordeal, by the way, will be nearly as bad, and I trust you are coming to support me under the trial. I hope the congregations are going to keep up. Last Sunday it was as crowded as the previous one, if not more so. . . .

To Mr. Mowbray Donne.

'The Athenæum,
'Pall Mall, S.W., *Sunday afternoon, Dec.* 23, 1894.

'My dear Mowbray,—All good wishes of the season to you and yours! I had an idea till I met your wife the other day,

that you had already resigned. I thought you expired with the current year, and I was waiting to congratulate you on coming out of the shafts until that date should have arrived. But now, O Superannuated Man, I beg, though late, to offer my best felicitations—only don't be unhappy at having nothing to do, and take to dr-nk-ng, like dear Charles Lamb.

'Mind you come up to luncheon on Boxing Day—when you will find "cold beef, and a tankard." *A propos* of the festive season, I have just heard an unpublished story of Dr. Johnson. A lady asked him within what limits of time it was right to eat mince-pies. "Good Heavens! Madam, did any one ever hear of such gross ignorance! They come in with "O Sapientia" and go out with the "Purification." . . . *I* made a good reply once about mince-pies. Some one said he ate one every day *for luck*; and I replied "Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum!"'

To Mrs. Smith.

'*Christmas Eve*, 1894.

'My dear Friend,—With the increase of care and responsibility that lies upon me, owing to my elevation to the highly honourable office to which I have been lately promoted—together with the natural melancholy of even *appearing* to my valued friends and acquaintances to be a bloated Pluralist—I am sure you will not expect from me the childlike levity and frivolity with which I have been hitherto accustomed to address my friends at Brocco Bank on this anniversary. So that you will kindly be content this time with a few seasonable reflections. . . .

'Let us inquire (for it can never be amiss to cultivate, even in the holiday season, that quickness and readiness of perception which are so necessary a part of education for practical life)—what is the difference between a gardener, a billiard-marker, and a gentleman, and a cathedral verger—Now don't speak all at once, especially when eating vulcanised greengages, or the soothing banana—but serenely and thoughtfully consider the following:—

'The gardener attends to his *Peas*; the Billiard-marker to his *Cues*; the gentleman to his *Peas and Cues*; and the verger to his *Pews and Keys*.

Chorus: Oh! there's no longer any doubt about the matter! He's out of his mind! And his recent Promotion has been too much for his poor brain.'

To Mr. Horace Smith.

'Master's House, Temple, E.C.

'Wordsworth (up to date).

'Concluding stanza to his beautiful poem called *The Daffodils.*

'"But when of late I went again
To glad me with the vernal show;
Beecham and Co. possessed the plain,
Board after board, in hideous row—
And now my gorge with horror fills
And rises at those Liver-Pills."

'By the way, my gorge rises for another reason! I have got a dear dog, who is to me "as a daughter"—(that is, he would be, were he a B-tch) and I have just been obliged to send him into the country for change of air and exercise, because your two Hon. Societies won't let me take him for a run in the Temple gardens! They say (Lawyer-like) that it would be "creating a precedent." Ha! Ha! They don't use the gardens themselves, and won't let me and my dog! I deeply regret to say that the following was lately picked up in King's Bench Walk:—

'"There are worse dogs than Canon A-ng-r's,
—The dogs who lie and snarl in mangers."

'The unhappy author has as yet escaped detection!

'Meanwhile I hope the one Reasonable B-nch-r, and his delightful family, are well and thriving. Mind you come to the *next* Grand Day, or I shall denounce you from the Pulpit.

'Goodbye, sweetheart, goodbye.

'I go to Bristol on Monday for two or three days on Cathedral Business.

'Your own unhappy "Master,"
Whom unmerciful disaster,
In the matter of his poor dog Tray,
Follows fast and follows faster.'

'A. Ainger.'

In 1895, Canon Ainger was made Honorary Chaplain to the Queen and, in the following year, one of her Chaplains in Ordinary. He had an innocent love for his honours. He delighted in insignia—in his robes, in the pomp and circumstance of office. And none enjoyed more than he the dignity of going, as he once did, to preach in state before the Queen

at Windsor. New interests were transforming his daily life, and besides his clerical business he had other public engagements which brought him fresh duties and pleasures. One function of his London life that he liked was serving on certain committees, especially those of the London Library and of the Literary Fund, at which he met men of mark and fellow-spirits. He came to regard them almost as men's parties—his favourite form of entertainment—and was at his best when he attended them, enlivening their routine with sudden sallies and doing hard work as well. Authors and their affairs always interested him, as these notes to Mr. Gosse suffice to show.

To Mr. Gosse.

'Master's House,
'Temple, *Saturday, May* 11, 1895.

'My dear Gosse,— . . . I am quite with you "in essence" on the greedy author question, but you must have known you would bring them—may I say—on their hind legs. But the idea of the Authors' Society[1] that they are bound (by their Charter) to rise and protect the British novelist from slander, is too funny; and the Tailors of Tooley Street are now quite out of it!'

'Richmond House,
'Clifton Hill, Bristol.

'*Goose* (*Edmund*),—*The letters of Thomas Lovell Beddoes. Now first edited. Pott* 8*vo., 5s. net, also* 25 *copies large paper,* 12*s.* 6*d. net.*

'(To my friend Edmund Gosse—on the latest Bêtise of J. L.)

'I wonder if you've seen, dear Gosse,
This last faux-pas of John's—
Take comfort—'tis your gain, not loss—
His geese were *always* swans!

'A. A.

'*Sept.* 10, 1895.'

[1] At this time, a certain reaction against the constant attacks of the Society of Authors upon the whole race of publishers, was marked by a speech in which Mr. Gosse warned novelists against pushing their claims for money too far. The Society of Authors was very angry, and there was a correspondence about the matter in *The Times* and elsewhere.

To Mr. Gosse.

'Richmond House,
'Clifton Hill, Bristol, *Monday*, [*Summer* 1895].

'My dear Gosse,— . . . I have been thinking of late about something that passed at a recent Committee of the Literary Fund. It was generally admitted that the *right cases* for our Bounty do not, and will not, apply *in persón*. Would it be possible so far to modify our rules, that intimate and trustworthy friends might apply *in their names*; and that the grants might be thus volunteered on our part, and not given as the result of a direct appeal?

'"Perpend," and let me know.—Yours always sincerely,

'Alfred Ainger.

'I hope I succeeded in disabusing our good Lord de Tabley of any idea that he was otherwise to me than a *persona gratissima*. It was quite a charming meeting on that lovely day in those Whitehall Gardens.'

'Lord de Tabley, the poet,' writes Mr. Gosse, 'had a great wish to know Ainger. I, as their common friend, urged De Tabley to speak to the Canon, and he did so, when they met next at the Athenæum, in April 1895. Unfortunately Lord de Tabley was excessively nervous and shy, and Ainger did not quite understand who it was who was addressing him. The poet was hurt, and wrote to me, "I got on but little with Ainger, and he snubbed me considerably." The result of reproaching Ainger for this cruel conduct was an indignant denial of the charge. The only thing to do was to ask them to meet one another at lunch in Whitehall, and this was successfully brought about on the 14th of June. It is of this little party that Ainger speaks in this letter. Besides Ainger, de Tabley, and the host, Mr. Austin Dobson, Sir Courtenay Ilbert, and Mr. Horatio Brown of Venice were of the company. As the weather was exquisitely fine, the table was spread in the garden, under a great hawthorn tree. Ainger, from the fact of his having to wipe off a supposed stain upon his manners, was particularly bewitching. He outdid himself in anecdote, in repartee, in the graceful give and take of animated conversation; and the little alfresco entertainment, prolonged over coffee and cigarettes, lasted far into the afternoon. Lord de Tabley, in going, made a little appealing apology. "The fault," he said "was solely mine; I have lost all habit of society and am

as an owl in the haunts of man." They parted the best of friends, promising one another many talks in the future, but de Tabley was already rapidly failing in health, and they never met again. He died in November of the same year.'

The correspondence begins again with some letters of that summer to Mr. Groome and Mr. du Maurier.

'Richmond House,
'Clifton Hill, Bristol, *August* 9, 1895.

'Dear Mr. Groome,—Some weeks ago I received from your Publishers a copy of your delightful book, *Two Suffolk Friends*, and though it only bore the inscription "with the Publisher's compliments," I feel sure that it was sent at your suggestion, and I therefore wish to return you my hearty thanks. It is one of the too few reprints from magazines that amply deserve the compliment, and I find myself constantly turning to it again, and laughing afresh over the Suffolk anecdotes, or—weeping afresh, I had almost said—over "The Only Darter," which is an absolutely perfect thing. How thankful one should be for such a piece of tender, human experience, after the wretched hysterical and prurient stuff of the "Yellow Book" people. . . . With many thanks and kind regards, yours very sincerely,

'Alfred Ainger.

'And it made my heart leap to find the book dedicated to my dear old friend, Mowbray Donne.'

'Richmond House,
'Clifton Hill, Bristol, [*Summer* 1895].

'My dearest Kicky,—I was delighted to get your letter, and to hear you were being so well done by in the watering-place of my youth; don't write to say by and by that you are being "*bored* and lodged"—which I fear you will, unless the weather improves, and the Jews and Jewesses leave their promised land. We are very wet and unsettled here, and the effect in this western country upon the spirits is indescribable. I read in the *Times* every day that "another depression is approaching"—but I can assure the Clerk of the Weather that it is here already, and all day long.

'I have just read dear Guthrie's "Country of Cockaigne," in to-day's *Punch*, and it is simply *exquisite*—as perfect as anything

he ever did—and made me cry in the loneliness of my own study here; not with an uneasy conscience, either; for I have subscribed for many years to this admirable Society. I cannot but think this Paper will go to many hearts and fetch in subscriptions and donations. I should like him to know how I love him for it!

'*You* are very good this week—though your satire on the Schoolmaster is not quite just. A Public School *ought not* to have to teach spelling, or to undertake such a thing. The boy's ignorance was either the fault of the Parents, Governess, and preparatory school—or the boy was one of those creatures (there are some such) who can't be taught to spell.

'Don't forget the "knot in the handkerchief." How is Arthur Davies?—

> "Well fed and nursed, at last it burst,
> Within that silent sea."

'Give my dear love to you all. I am jokeless here, and have to make them all myself. I am touched by your choosing "Clifton Gardens" as your address. It is another link between us.

'I do hope Miss Baird[1] will be up to the mark—let me hear. Your own Canon, ALFRED AINGER.'

'RICHMOND HOUSE,
'CLIFTON HILL, BRISTOL, *Saturday, Sept.* 7, 1895.

'DEAREST KICKY,—Thanks for your last note. I hope you are getting stouter, stronger, wiser and better, for your sojourn among the men of Kent. I see that *Trilby* is to be brought out to-night at Manchester. Do, *Do* send me a line to tell me of its reception and prospects, and how Miss Baird acquitted herself. I have read the story again since I have been here—with INCREASED delight at three-fourths of it, and increased regrets for some other things. But Trilby herself is the charm of the book and a κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί.

'No stories, no jokes—no nothing.

'*Frenchman entering a rather crowded railway carriage: "Ah! mille pardons!* I 'ope I do not cock-roach!"

'*'Arry in the corner.*—"Hignorant hass! He means *hen-croach.*"

'I know you like *Puns* (calembours, in French).

'I begin to see daylight, for this is September 7th, and at the

[1] In the performance of *Trilby* as a play.

end of the month I am a free man! It is very hot here, and last night we had a lively thunder-storm. When do you return to Oxford Square? Write me if but a line about *Trilby*—and tell me if the little ex-linen-draper took the rôle of Little Billee.—Best love to you all, your own Canon Residentiary, A. A.'

'Master's House,
'Temple, E.C., *Wednesday Evening, Dec.* 4, 1895.

'My dear Kicky,—I really *did* enjoy myself last evening. Of course the Play is a ridiculous Parody on the Novel, but to me who had previously read the story, it of course suggested and reminded me at every turn of the dear Characters and the dear Pictures.

'The acting, too, was better than I expected. Miss Baird has not indeed a *spark* of genius, or even of talent (I think), but she *looks* it to perfection, and being a lady, *under does*, instead of *over doing*, the Bohemianism. Tree is as clever as possible, but it is of course melodrama of the most Transpontine order. Lionel Brough would be very good, if only his Scotch dialect were a little better. I thought the comic clergyman *very* good, and cannot but think he *toned himself down* last night, out of respect to my august presence. How well Henry Kemble would have played the part! I fancy this man bases his style rather on Kemble. I laughed heartily at the incident of the Laird and the Pantomime nose, which is *not* in the book. Altogether I enjoyed myself very much, and should not mind seeing it over again.—Love to you all, your own Canon.'

'The Glade,
'Branch Hill, Hampstead, *Wednesday, March* 14, 1896.

'My dear Kicky,—I *was* an idiot yesterday: I had entirely forgotten that you wouldn't be at home; and when I found that your young people were out, I resolved not to stay—though your admirable cook informed me that during the few minutes I was in the house, she had "put down another chop" for the undeserving visitor! I had to be in town that morning, consulting a new Doctor (Felix Semon—*juif agréable!*) so that I did not quite come into town for nothing. I think I shall hardly be able to repeat my visit till Tuesday next—when I hope for long arrears of talk.

'I was at Toynbee Hall on Monday. Dining and "reading a

Paper," and heard from all quarters *enthusiastic* commendation of your Lecture. You may be quite satisfied of that, and of the delight it gave. I don't fancy you will have a letter from —— *I* never do—and indeed I think that the "vote of thanks" to the Lecturer at the end is supposed to cancel all the rest. I think this is a mistake. But they are so possessed with the idea at Toynbee that it is the *duty* of the "Better-off" to do these things ("and I don't denige it, Betsy,") that thanks are hardly due! But I think this is an error of judgment and of policy.

'The edge of Tenniel's cartoon is rather taken off by the fact that the "Star of Tournament" was sprawled in the dust by his own Party last night—his "second appearance" on these Boards. —Ever your true and trusty ALFRED AINGER.

'I am sending Frank a suggestion for next *Big Cut*—sequel to this week's—Rosebery on the ground, prodded by Labouchere and the Irish. Quotation: "So like a shattered column lay the King."

'*Title*: "Sorry we spoke."'

This is the last letter that we have from Ainger to du Maurier, though they met many times after it was written. Through their fifteen years of close companionship, their intercourse had never suffered a break. They met constantly at one another's houses, whether in London or in Hampstead, and this year they were together at Whitby.

'MY DEAR AINGER'—(du Maurier had written to his friend, who was there, but without him, for the first time in 1891)—'It is delightful to get a letter from you at Whitby—the place we all like the best in the world. I am only sorry you have so little time there.

"It's all right when you know it,
But you've got to know it fust."

'But I gather that your nieces and Mr. Evans will remain longer, so tell them to drive to Robin Hood's Bay, and Runswick and Staithes (unless they prefer going there by train); tell them especially to manage Staithes, *circa* 4, 5, 6 P.M., a little before high tide, to see some 40 (or 50) cobles disembark to herring-fish, with all the town, women and children, pushing the boats off—the loveliest sight I ever saw! Tell them to walk to Cock Mill; there are 3 or 4 ways—one by the old town, one by Bagdale,

one through the meadows over the wooden railway bridge, from the top of St. Hilda's Terrace. Tell them to walk from Cock Mill to Rig Mill, and take tea at the latter place (and have a fly ready to take them back). Tell them to walk along the cliffs westward from the Spa, through fields and over stiles till they reach Sylvia Robson's cottage (of course they know their *Sylvia's Lovers* by heart)—and tell them, oh! tell them, to stand on the bridge at sundown and see the shops lighting up along the staithes, and the fisher-boats (if the tide suits) go sailing out into the west. Also they must not forget that Saturday is market day, and that the market place in the old town is good to see on Saturdays.

'Don't forget as you go past the top of St. Hilda's Terrace to look at No. 1, the humble but singularly charming little house where your friends have dwelt, and would fain dwell again (and two of them end their days there, somewhere towards the middle of the twentieth century).'

Ainger always saw the place through du Maurier's eyes. He and his nieces and Mr. Evans, who had lost his wife in 1891, joined the du Mauriers there in 1896. Ainger liked nothing better than to go on exploring excursions to Yorkshire villages; and he only made one condition—that they should end in what was always to him the ideal treat, tea at some wayside inn. 'Do let us have a "Cow and Tooth-brush" (or a "Cat and Snuffers") expedition to-day,' was his constant refrain. Of the contests of wit and drollery *en route*, of their races to reach the inn first and earn the quixotic privilege of 'treating' the whole party to tea, many legends still survive; and once they were all delighted by seeing 'Trilby Drops' advertised for sale in a little village sweet-shop. 'Such is fame,' said du Maurier, but when his daughter went in to ask about the 'drops,' the girl behind the counter had no idea what 'Trilby' meant.

Du Maurier's health was failing, though he hardly knew to what extent. 'It is only in going uphill that one realises how fast one is going downhill,' he once said, half in fun, half ruefully, as he toiled up a steep Whitby hill; and when the news came of Millais' death, and he was asked to be pall-bearer, he refused on the score of his weakness. By that time, too,

his eyesight had almost gone. It was happy for him that, just as this tragedy approached, there dawned for him also his unexpected success as a writer. 'I think the best years of a man's life are after forty. A man at forty has ceased to haunt the moon,' so he once said, and his luck justified the saying. But his modesty, like the modesty of Ainger, was one of his chief distinctions. 'This boom rather distresses me when I reflect that Thackeray never had a boom,' he remarked after *Trilby* appeared. The boom did not distress Ainger—indeed, for him, the prestige of his 'dear artist' illumined the last years of their friendship. For last years they were. The end was fast approaching. Early in October, George du Maurier fell ill, and on Wednesday evening, the 8th, he died —that evening of *Punch*, round the mahogany tree, which he had made peculiarly his own.

He had once said half playfully that he should like his 'little Canon' to read the funeral service over him, because he would do it so beautifully. And Ainger fulfilled his wish. His own strong conviction of an after-life strengthened him to do this for more than one close friend. And if this was a faith that du Maurier had not shared, he knew how to reverence it in his companion.

Ainger was not the man to write elegies. He had no taste for oratory, especially the oratory of sorrow. The paper on du Maurier which he wrote in the *Hampstead Annual* is marked by a delicate restraint. But it has its own kind of eloquence.

'As a friend,' he writes, 'as also in the realm of humorous art, his loss is irreparable. Substituting the name of Hampstead for that of Cambridge, one may recall the touching lines of Cowley on the death of his friend, Mr. William Hervey:—

> 'Ye fields of Hampstead, our dear Hampstead, say,
> Have ye not seen us walking every day?
> Was there a tree about which did not know
> The love betwixt us two?
>
> 'Henceforth, ye gentle trees, for ever fade,
> Or your sad branches thicker join,
> And into darksome shades combine,
> Dark as the grave wherein my friend is laid.'

CHAPTER XVI

LIFE AND LETTERS

1897-1903

In 1897, Alfred Ainger turned sixty, but his friends found few changes either in his outer or his inner man. He had little of any age about him, and the sketch given of him at thirty, when he stood on the threshold of his career, hardly needs any alteration. A recent description of him in a letter from Mr. Beck, the present Master of Trinity Hall and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, would have portrayed him as truly at any moment since he came to London. 'He was so snow-white in locks,' runs the passage, 'and so *petit*, craned forward, and ethereal, like a gnome or a spirit peering with an elf-like enquiry out of the infinite for a brief and amused moment, that I doubt if even Mr. Rivière could catch him'—an allusion to the picture which that artist was then making of him. Perhaps he looked at his best in the velvet coats he wore at home—a best coat for company, or, for solitude, what he called his 'organ-grinder.' He was never rich, nor would it have suited him to be so, except for purposes of giving. For though he was alive to comfort and liked dignity of surroundings, his habits remained of the simplest. That he felt he could no longer 'ride on the top of an omnibus' was his one regret when he was made Master, and though far from callous to good food or good wine, he disliked any luxury that made itself felt. 'I cannot go to the ——'s house,' he once said, 'it smells so disgustingly of riches.'

The Temple was the ideal setting for his character as well as his figure—and the Temple claimed him for her own; not alone her 'polished corners' within, but her outer courts: the Benchers' Hall, the legal purlieus that he loved, the many un-

expected corners, Goldsmith's tomb near the Church—all the urban calm of the place, with the roaring traffic of the Strand at a stone's-throw. The Temple is still one of the few places left for habits to grow up in; and Canon Ainger was made for habits. There every one knew him and he knew every one: the old porter, for whom he so often took sandwiches, pretending he wanted them himself; the vergers, the plumbers on the church roof, the German bandsmen, whom he tried to persuade to play Schubert; the newspaper-boy from whom he regularly bought his evening paper and who called him his 'best friend'; the blind beggar near the Embankment, whom he could not pass without an alms and who never failed to know that he was there, because of his voice. These accustomed charities made a network which grew stronger with every year of his life at the Temple. As for his servants, it is not exaggeration to say that they adored him. No more generous master existed, and his faith in family life opened his heart to their needs. He knew all their domestic affairs; he helped their relations and invited them to stay in his house. And the one thing that aroused his severity was to hear them blamed before other people. His life, indeed, was full of courtesies—little deeds of fidelity which he performed wherever he might be; the *Times* sent every day for thirty years to his friend in the country, fastened up by himself with the same thud, at the same moment after luncheon, as he stamped its cover upon the floor; the papers and the letters—and the bank-notes—despatched with unfailing punctuality to those left behind by life—invalids, governesses, the humble, the depressed: these may be small things, but they made the happiness of many.

More than one career was set going by some unknown kindness from him. He delighted in helping boys to start in life, or giving a hand to some one who was down on his luck. Of more public enterprises he also took his share, devoting his time and money to a few charities that he cared for—to the People's Concert Society, for which he often spoke; to the Children's Country Holiday Fund; to King's College Hospital, of whose Committee he was a faithful member; and, foremost,

to the Inns of Court Mission. This was the philanthropic work which most appealed to him and to which he gave his best efforts. Its Warden, the Rev. G. D. Latham, has left us a record of what he was to the Mission.

'Holding,' he writes, 'the commanding position that he held, in the Church and in the legal world, a word from him would at any time, but more especially in its early and struggling days, have gone far to leave upon the Inns of Court Mission any impress that he desired. The temptation to speak that word, not once, but many times, must have been strong to a man of his ripe experience, keen mind, and quick imagination, as he watched a young and untried man take charge of an enterprise which was meant by its founders to represent the best side of a great profession when organised for social and religious . . . purposes; an enterprise which was bound to affect profoundly the prestige of the Law and of the Church among the working-classes of a certain district. To stand aside, and never once to interfere with the detailed workings of such an organisation, though exercising to the full his rightful responsibility in the shaping of its broad outlines and policy, required no little self-control. . . . His support was strong and unfailing. . . . On occasions he came to Drury Lane, and chatted to the working men who filled the Institute, entering with zest into the club-interests which were so strangely different from the ordinary things of his life. On the evening of one Easter Day he came and preached at the Mission Service; few of those who were there will forget him as he stood, a slight and swaying figure, speaking quite simply, but with the spirit of earnestness and reality which always characterised him in his preaching. One of the congregation was a deaf girl, who said afterwards that his was the only preaching that she had been able to hear for years. . . . Perhaps his greatest opportunities for manifesting an effective interest in the work of the Mission arose out of his position as a member of the governing body of the Mission, both on the Council and on the Executive Committee of the Council. He was a member of both of these bodies from the first until the end, and, unless prevented from being present by insuperable difficulties, never failed to attend their meetings, or to take an active and important part in their deliberations; while no thought of personal convenience or inconvenience was ever allowed to interfere with his placing the Master's House in the Temple at the disposal of the Committee for its gatherings.'

One of the last things that he planned was a reading for the Mission's benefit; but illness interfered and his project was not fulfilled.

Ainger kept a young man's power of making new friends, and the last ten years of his life brought him fresh intimacies, as well as many fresh acquaintances, especially among men of letters. The houses of the Edmund Gosses, the Andrew Langs, the Beechings, were among those he most liked to dine at. The first two, as we know, had been his colleagues in literary research, and soon became his comrades, nor was he slow to express his appreciation of their work. He stayed with the Langs, too, at St. Andrews, a place which stimulated him to talk. He liked to linger on Scotch subjects there, on Walter Scott and County Guy—'one of the finest things in the English language'—or upon his dearly loved Burns. 'Leave out his debased side, when you read him,' he said to Mrs. Lang, 'make for the poet alone.' Of modern authors he read ever fewer, but when on occasion he tackled them, it was impossible to predict what would please him. If something in a book took his fancy the rest of it was safe, even though it seemed to make against his views. *The Golden Bough*, by Dr. Frazer of Trinity, was a case in point. 'He read it,' writes Mr. Gosse, 'at my suggestion, in 1898. There was much, in this remarkable study of certain phases of anthropology, which was foreign to Ainger's taste and habits of mind. It was quite a chance whether he would not fling it from him. On the contrary, it affected him like an extraordinary romance, and for a time he was full of it. He severely snubbed, as he *could* snub, an unfortunate man who objected to the book as "heterodox." "Pooh!" Ainger said, "you mustn't take it as any kind of doxy. I'm not proposing it for use at mothers' meetings. But it is a wonderful coloured window looking out into strange places where I never looked before."'

The one change that made itself felt in him was a certain diminution of exuberance. Age had a little to do with it, but deliberate dignity had more. The drolleries, the escapades of

mimicry, with which he had amused his circle, were, he thought, no longer permissible to one who occupied his office, and his sense of the fitness of things—his instinct for decorum—told most at this time on his life. He was as particular for others as for himself, and disliked any inexactness, whether ceremonial or social. If he made some trifling blunder himself, it caused him the deepest distress. He once, 'in 1899' (to quote Mr. Gosse again), 'wrote a copy of complimentary verses to the Dutch novelist, Maarten Maartens, whom he very much admired. But he was not aware that this is a pseudonym, and when he received a letter of charming thanks from Holland, signed "Jan Martinus Willem van de Poorten-Schwartz," he was in the highest dismay, and ran about showing the signature to everybody as "the most extraordinary *nom de guerre*; and who can it be, and what had I better do?" His agitation was soothed by being told that all he had to do had long ago been done.'

This increased feeling for deportment no doubt also restrained his talk and made him oftener grave than of old, so that many of those who met him in these latter years had no idea he was a wit. The danger of that gift for his profession frequently tied his tongue. 'Wit, my dear, can make you enemies; but it cannot make you friends'—so he said to his niece. But it was not true of his own wit, which certainly did make him friends, though it never gave him a foe. Its sting, it is true, often lay in his use of a quotation which, ten chances to one, was not recognised by his audience. 'The "prosperity" of an allusion, as of a jest, lies in the ear of him that hears it,'—he once wrote concerning Elia, and the words apply to himself. And perhaps another reason why his sayings left no pain was the fact that they did not touch on anxious topics. He left politics severely alone, and felt no temptation to allow his brilliance to sharpen party strife. Nor did he often come across politicians. There was an exceptional occasion when he met Mr. Balfour at the house of Mr. Gosse, an incident recounted by their host, whose words we will once more use. 'On the 22nd of November

1901, Ainger dined with me' 'to meet Mr. A. J. Balfour, to whom he had been introduced before, and whom he had seen in his congregation at the Temple, but with whom he had never yet talked. On this occasion they had a long conversation, and Ainger spoke afterwards with great appreciation of Mr. Balfour's agility of mind, and of the fresh and eager manner in which he went out to meet new ideas half-way. "In fact," Ainger said to me, "there 's nothing of the hide-bound politician about him; he might be an ordinary 'littery' fellow, like you or me, for all the law he lays down about things he knows nothing about." This was great praise from Ainger, who had a curious dislike of the ordinary political mind, "fitted up," he once said, "with rows of little phials full of quack medicines, and if you take one you must take them all."'

After Ainger was made Master, his readings became rarer. He still lectured at the Royal Institution, at Bristol, and at Newnham, at King's College for Ladies, and elsewhere; indeed, some of his best lectures belong to this period. But his Shakespeare readings had now to be kept for few and private occasions. It was not that his zest had gone. Any daily occurrence might start him on pages of quotation. His niece remembers how one summer as he sat at breakfast in the coffee-room of a Welsh hotel, a bear was led past the window and set him off at once upon the scene of the dancing bear in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, while the occupants of the other tables looked on at his gestures in bewilderment. And those who heard him read Falstaff, as he did in 1902, felt that his vigour was undiminished. The latter years of his life brought him a fresh pleasure—a discovery in the art of interpretation. In 1898, Mr. Walford Davies became organist at the Temple, and from their association there originated a scheme of Ainger's reading to music. The idea hardly sounds artistic, but Walford Davies both wrote and played the accompaniment; and no one who heard Ainger's many-toned voice in *The Brook*, or *The Ancient Mariner*, supported, as it were, by the sub-current of sympathetic harmonies, could doubt of the success of the experiment. *The Tempest* was the last

work they had meant thus to express, but their project was never realised.

It is difficult to speak of this time, without dwelling upon the happiness that he found in this gifted musician's company. The bond that united them was not only music, although that meant much, or the keen interest Davies gave him of watching a budding career. His friendship was that of the older for the younger man, both protective and admiring, and bringing with it the sense of refreshment. Bound up as it was with the Temple services, it cheered him more, perhaps, than anything else in these late years. Nor did they meet only over the music for the church, though they always arranged it in concert—by letter when not by conversation. The Master's House became a home to Walford Davies; and many were the evenings that he spent there, exploring the land of Brahms, playing Beethoven and Bach and Schubert, while the Master stood behind his chair, one hand upon his shoulder, the other beating time in the air in the way so familiar to his friends. And no success that Ainger had himself could have given him greater delight than did the growing reputation of the artist he had chosen for his own.

These were prosperous days with him. All went well with his family. His elder niece kept house for him; the younger was married, in 1896, to Mr. Walter Evans, his host, as of old, at Darley Abbey. And his nephew Bentley, who became the Rector of St. Peter's, Sandwich, also married in 1895 and had two children, a boy and a girl. They seemed the one thing that their child-loving great-uncle wanted, and the boy, at least, grew old enough to feel his charm. All his ancient spells were exercised upon 'Toozleyboots,' as he called him —and Toozleyboots thought that there was nobody like him. It was characteristic of him—the mark of one who really cared for children—that he did not like spoiling them, and knew that they did not like it either; that if at one moment he was the magician, at the next he could be the disciplinarian.

But his letters from 1897 are, perhaps, the best record of the next six years.

'Master's House,
'Temple, E.C., *Nov.* 8, 1897.

'My dear Gosse,—Thank you very much for your new Book, into which I have as yet only dipped at random, but with which, thus far, I find myself everywhere in agreement. We do indeed need a few teachers abroad to remind us of the difference between good literature and what is bad and foolish. By the way, did you read Andrew Lang's infinitely droll parody of Hall Caine in last week's *Punch*?

'I have been refreshing my memory of Leigh Hunt's poetry since you last wrote; and I must confess I find *no* traces of any influence over Hood. He treated "Hero and Leander," but in so wholly different a way. It was really on Shakespeare—notably *Venus and Adonis*—that Hood there modelled himself, I believe.

'I quite agree with you that Hood took his Keats *through* J. H. Reynolds. I rather thought I had conveyed my meaning to that effect. I meant to. Nor did I at all mean to decry Reynolds on the serious and lyrical side. I think he had a very pretty gift. But surely when he became *comic*, as in Peter Bell the second, he was very thin and weak. Think of Andrew Lang and Owen Seaman by comparison!—Yours always, Alfred Ainger.

To Miss Thompson.

'I took duty, but did not preach at the Foundling last Sunday. The sermon is just the same as of old. Poor old —— unexpectedly got better and preached, and was as dull as could be. . . . I felt that I would rather have been at our own service at the Temple, where there is something like *worship* and *life*.'

To Mrs. Smith.

'Master's House,
'Temple, E.C., *Christmas* 1897.

'My dear Friend,—As I was about to remark last Christmas Eve, when I suddenly found my stock of stationery exhausted, whenever I am much duller than usual, you may be sure there is some very good reason for it.

'It is terribly foggy to-day, moreover, and I have a pound or two of best Wallsend wandering about in my Bronchial cavities. Wasn't it Charles Lamb, by the way, who protested one day against poets insisting on reciting their verses to everybody they met? "Now, I myself," he said, "wrote a little poem only last

night, but I should never dream of repeating it to the present company." This of course whetted the company's appetite, and they pressed and insisted that he would give them such a treat as to let them hear it. He made a great fuss, of course, and at last said, "Oh, well, of course if you wish it." And proceeded to recite the Poem—which was

"Oh! my Gog!
What a Fog!"

'This reminds me that a very interesting memoir of Lamb's friend, Thomas Hood, has been lately written by—well, I *forget the name*—but it is reviewed in last week's *Spectator*. A word to the wise.

'I wish I had a few good stories to tell you, but you are such go-ahead people in Sheffield, that all our jokes in London have been known to you long before they reach what the late Mr. Compton called "the great Metrolopus." For instance, you know, I am sure, all the best things of poor Sir Frank Lockwood, at whose funeral a great party to-day assembled. I have just met Lord Rosebery who was there. He *was* a witty man—and was even your Recorder, was he not? Did he not once in Scotland, after hearing the Highland magnates announce themselves as "Dunvegan and Mrs. Glentoddy," and so forth, announce *himself and wife* as "24 Lennox Gardens and Mrs. Lockwood"? The Lawyers, among whom I often disport myself at leisure, are witty folks. Mr. Justice Mathew, for instance, expressed himself very happily the other day about Lord Justice Lindley, who was made Master of the Rolls—a most excellent appointment, of course. But a very bad case of jobbery had occurred just before, so Mathew said, alluding to the appointment of Lindley: "A most extraordinary choice! not a *single qualification* that I can think of, except *merit*." . . .

'Who are they you will welcome at your hospital Board? Will there be Seymour Knyvett (as right as a trivet) and Maggie his wife (the delight of his life)—and I guess there'll be Katie, whose judgment is weighty—whenever you tell her to go to the cellar, to choose "foreign drains" in the form of champagnes—for you're not like some folks who play practical jokes—and give your guests *Perry* wherewith to make merry—What have I wandered *from*? Oh! there's Lily and Tom—and I'm sure that the latter will honour his platter—for he plays (so's the talk) a good knife and fork—for no Master-Cutler does work that is subtler—

(It's a Firm I ne'er mock would—that bears the name "Lockwood")—My pen I've just mended (I feared it had ended!), by a Knife's timely aid, with *their* name on the blade. And what makes it more pleasant—the knife was a *Present*!!

'And now I've no time to go searching for rhyme: so my very dear friends, let my love make amends for this trumpery verse (and it couldn't be worse)—This season of Turkey is terribly murky. But love sheds its rays upon gloomiest days. Judge this Fun of your friend's by the kindness it lends—and then there's no danger, you'll be hard on A. AINGER.'

TO THE SAME.

'MASTER'S HOUSE,
'TEMPLE, E.C., *Christmas* 1898.

'MY DEAR FRIEND,—"As the Festive Season again recurs, I have to solicit a renewal of that friendly confidence, which it will ever be my study to deserve. I hope to be able to supply you with some fine chestnuts for the Christmas dinner, of which samples are enclosed. Joe Millers are cheap to-day."—I quote from my favourite grocer. Lily—that "plant and flower of light" (Ben Jonson) sends me a very gratifying account of you all, especially of Edward, who I understand is shortly to take Holy Orders. If he would wish me to sign his "Si quis," I shall be happy to do so—and hope he will not think I am "Si-quizzing" him. . . .

'I heard a story lately of a Butler.

'Party in a Country House. Maid dressing a guest's hair. *Guest*: "I hope, Parker, you are comfortable in your place." "Oh yes, Ma'am—the society down-stairs is so superior. The Butler leads the conversation. He is such a refined man—indeed, quite scientific. He has been telling us all about Evolution, and we quite understand it now. He says we are all descended from Darwin."

'By the way, did you hear of Mrs. Creighton (wife of the Bishop of London) addressing a great Mothers' Meeting at the East End of London on how to make home attractive and comfortable and so on.

'*Old Lady* at the conclusion to another old Lady, "Ah! it's all very well—but I should like to know what Mrs. Creighton does when old Mr. Creighton *comes home drunk*."

'And this by a natural association of ideas reminds me of an epigram just sent me from Bristol. At Clevedon (where William and I once sat and smoked under the Church wall) there is a very

High Church clergyman named Vicars Foote, who has been lately reprimanded by his Bishop for excessive Ritual. A flippant person puts into the offending parson's mouth the following retort:—

"I will not leave my benefice,
Nor change the ways I've got.
A Bishop's foot may be put down,
A *Vicar's Foot* may not!"

'I wonder if another Theological story has reached Sheffield yet—about the old Scotch lady who heard that in the Revised Version of the Lord's Prayer, the Revisers had substituted "Deliver us from the evil one" for "Deliver us from evil"—(as they *have* done, you know). The old lady replied, "Eh, Sirs—but he'll be sair uplifted!"

'I have been in Scotland this year, and in Ireland, but I think most of the good stories have been told. By the way, if you want some good *old* stories, get ——'s recently published Volume of Rummy-nuisances (this is my witty way of spelling it). I have suggested (not to *him*) as a motto for the next Edition—

'Under the Chestnut Tree
Who loves to lie with me?

'As we are on the subject of the clergy, have you ever heard *this*? Scotch Minister returning to his Manse in the gloaming, becomes aware of a figure sleeping sweetly in a ditch. On further examination, he discovers one of his own Elders. After dragging him up and restoring his suspended animation, he asks, with some indignation, where his Church Officer had been. "Well, Minister, I canna weel remember whether it was a wedding or a Funeral —*but it was a gran' success!*" It must have been the same gentleman (or one of the same pattern) who at a dinner party, after drinking champagne during the earlier courses, was heard to murmur: "I hope there's some whisky coming! I get vera tired of these *mineral waters*!"

'And now that you, like this gentleman, are getting "vera tired" of so much prose—and that, *not* sparkling—what say you to dropping into poetry, like Mr. Wegg?

'There was an old man of Bengal
Who purchased a Bat and a Ball
Some gloves, and some pads—
(It was one of his fads—
For he never played cricket at all!)

'. . . Well, I fear you and yours will have to mourn over me

that years do not seem to "bring the philosophic mind," and that your poor friend is just as frivolous as he was thirty years ago. Well, well, it 's Christmas time, and a few Crackers (besides *Tom Smith's*) may be allowed upon the dinner table, among the plainer and more wholesome viands. And so I trust to be forgiven, and to be thought kindly of by my dear old friends at the "Westwood Arms," for that is *still* its name to me, knowing that they are always open to receive their attached and faithful friend,

'A. A.'

To Mr. Cave.

'Master's House,
'Temple, E.C., *Dec.* 20, 1899.

'My dear Dan,—. . . We are living through a strange experience this Christmas, dear Boy,—such as you and I never knew before. Let us have a day of National Humiliation by all means; but do not let us regard it as Lord —— does in to-day's *Times*, who naïvely suggested that as the Boers had kept their *own* day of Humiliation and had then enjoyed some successes, perhaps we might adopt the same course, with the same results! Literally this is what the noble lord said, and I have seldom been more saddened by a display (very common) of Christian paganism.'

To Mrs. Smith.

'*Christmas*, 1899.

'. . . The mention of Biblical subjects reminds me of a very singular incident that occurred not long ago in an American Court of Justice. The Presiding Judge had a very difficult case before him (closely resembling one that is reported in 1 Kings, iii.), in which two women claimed to be the mother of a child, who was produced in court. The learned Judge thought that History might very well repeat itself, and asked that the infant should be handed up. He then solemnly opened his Bowie-knife, and made as if he would again act upon the ancient precedent. Whereupon, one of the Mothers exclaimed "Oh! no! if it comes to *that*, you may keep the child yourself"—upon which both ladies left the Court. The Judge sent an officer of the Court in pursuit, but they had hopelessly disappeared. The Judge, as he walked out of Court, with the infant in his arms, was heard to mutter—"Waal! Solomon was a very over-rated man.'

'Now, this deeply interesting narrative will do very well to start the conversation at Dinner on Christmas Day; and indeed a worse anecdote will be at least better than that unfailing disturber of family Harmony—a discussion as to *which year* is the beginning of the next century. This will certainly wreck the peace, and disturb the Testamentary arrangements of many an otherwise attached and united household this Christmas. I observe that the Emperor of Germany (quite a gay Canute over again) has ordained that the New Century begins on the first of January next—so of course little remains to be said. Though he reminds me of the American millionaire who, on the voyage over from New York to this country, was seen at the hour of sunset standing at the Bows of the Vessel, with his gold chronometer in his hand. And thus he addressed the Orb of Day, slowly approaching its disappearance. "Now then," he said, "you blooming Ball—if you don't make haste, you'll be late." It is a beautiful thought, making his three hundred dollar ticker the standard for the universe.

'Talking of Americans, I met at dinner the other evening, for the first time in my life, the great Mark Twain. A droll-looking, and droll-mannered gentleman who did not, however, waste any very good things on his company. Oddly enough, *I* told *him* a very ancient American jest which I remembered from the time I was in jackets. He had never heard it, and laughed so loud that the other end of the dinner table insisted upon knowing the reason. It was a very fast-trotting mare that an American gentleman drove, with a friend by his side. After a while the friend enquired what *cemetery* it was they were passing through. The mile-stones came so quick that he was misled.

'And now, my dear old friend—what can I say? Perhaps I ought not to be writing in this frivolous vein at all, for we are living in sad times, and there is hardly a home around us that has not received some wounds, more or less severe, in its circle of family or friendship. But perhaps it is better not to depart from old customs, though

"Sadly falls our Christmas eve."

'. . . Do you know the two following lines—perhaps the most beautiful couplet in the English language?

"The feathered tribe on pinions swim the air.
Not so the Mackerel—and still less the Bear!"

To Mr. Horace Smith.

'Master's House,
'Temple, E.C., *May* 7, 1900.

'My dearest Horace,—Your note this morning came to me as a real angelic visitant. For in spite of your holding me to be well and fit, I am really weak and depressed after influenza, and was quite *done* after our long morning service yesterday. I was depressed, too, about my sermon, which seemed to me to be an old, old, tale and hardly worth saying, but now I am thankful that I preached it, for your good opinion is very precious to me. Is your enigmatical signature a reference to my sermon of the Sunday before, which *was* commemorative of William Cowper "of the Inner Temple"? I certainly pronounced his name *Cooper*, because to the best of one's knowledge, he so called *himself*—as certainly *others* called him.

"A riddle by Cowper
Made me swear like a *trooper*,"

are the first lines of a contemporary answer in verse to one of C.'s poetical charades. Did you ever hear of "Cowper-Temple"?

'I also said a few words in honour of your late lamented chief, Sir John Bridge, for whom I had a great esteem and liking.

'Yes, I knew about Nowell's article in the *Times*. Bruce Richmond had told me it was coming. But these young scholars soon get *us* old fogies out of our depths, and I cry, like Julius Caesar: "Help! Help! Licinius"—like a sick gy—irl.

'Excuse brevity, for I am out of condition, and the grasshopper is a burden.

'Love to you all. You none of you have any faults, but I love you all still.—Your affec^te^,, A. Ainger.'

To Mrs. Smith.

'*Christmas*, 1900.

'. . . My delightful recollection of Lily's last Musical Festival brings to mind a very musical child I heard of the other day, who began her Prayers one evening—"Pray God, bless dear Papa and Mamma—Beethoven, Nursey, and Brahms." I am sure Lily will love that child at once, and predict for her a distinguished musical career. And that recalls to me a recent incident at the Parish Church of Kensington, in the Choir of which, Sir Richard Webster (now Chief Justice) has sung for years.

A lady in the congregation (a stranger) recently asked the Verger if he would kindly point out to her the distinguished person in question. The Verger replied: "Well, Ma'am—*that* is the Vicar; and *them's* the Curates, and *I'm the Verger*; but as for the Choir —as long as they does their dooty, we don't enquire into their hantecedents!"

'Terrible effect of the war upon an infant's faith—"Mummy, is the story you told me about Jonah and the Whale *true*?" "Yes, my darling, *of course* it's true! it's in the Bible." "Yes, Mummy—but has it been *confirmed by the War Office*?" Shocking, Shocking!

'. . . And here is a nice new poem on a nice old model:—

'There was a young lady of Venice
Who used hard-boiled eggs to play tennis—
When they said "Ain't that wrong?"
She exclaimed "Get along!
You don't *know* how productive my *hen is*!"'

The following note to the painter, Mr. Briton Rivière, marks a friendship in which he had long found a source of real pleasure. He loved studios, and he spent pleasant hours in that of Mr. Rivière, watching his pictures grow and suggesting subjects to him. And he extended his affection to the artist's son, Hugh, who has given us the best portrait existing of Canon Ainger. The successes of both men delighted him. 'Ah,' he said to the elder Rivière, who had just been made R.A., 'I see you have taken in the "Academy"; before long you will be taking in the "Athenæum."'

To Mr. Briton Rivière.

'I have just been to the Private View of the Academy and seen Mr. Rivière's "St. George," a very poetic and touching picture—the human figure's *exquisite*; what the critics and public will say to the crushed horse, I am not so sure. Some one says the *compass* of the picture is so remarkable—from the Upper *Sea* to the lower *Gee*.

'(A sea and shore high up and far off in the picture, a bold effect of perspective.)

To Canon Beeching.

'Royal Hotel,
'Whitby, *Sunday, August* 19, 1900.

My dear Beeching,— . . . I am so grateful for your kind words about the Chaucer papers. I am one of those unhappy men who, spending too much of their lives in trying to gauge other men's writings, never have any confidence in anything themselves write, until some kind friend reassures them. By the way, ——'s High Church thermometer is going up and up, and even the High churchmen find it a trifle hot. . . . It reminds me of what Lowell wrote about Theodore Parker—

'whose opinions
Were "so (ultra) cinian" they shocked the Socinians.

We have been to church this morning, and heard a facetious curate who lamented the decadence of Christians in these days, who travel so much "on wheels" that they can't get up early enough for Divine Service, and explained that this was not what was meant by saints "rejoicing in their beds." I could not but recall Swift's advice to the young clergyman never to "show his wit," for by the nicest calculation it was a thousand to one that he *had not any.*

'I was in Stamford the other day giving away some prizes; such an interesting old town, though I had not time to see Burleigh House. I wonder if you are near it—I fancy not. . . .

'Any spare moments that you can waste on your unworthy friend will be gratefully welcomed. I hope Mrs. Beeching and the filiolae are drinking in health at every pore. Our best regards.
Ever yours, Alfred Ainger.'

To Mr. Gosse.

'Master's House, Temple, E.C.,
'*Wednesday Evening, October* 24, 1900.

'My dear Gosse,—How can I adequately thank you for the truly generous and friendly Review that I have just read in the *Quarterly*? I could not but suspect that it would be *kindly,* for I have ever met with kindness and serviceableness at your hands —but I am indeed touched by all your praise.

'May I say also how just and excellent I think your remarks on Lamb himself, and how I marvel that on a subject about which

so much has naturally been written, you have managed to say so much that is fresh and stimulating. I am quite with you as to "Rosamund Gray"—I myself used the sad word "insanity" with regard to it, and Lamb had, as you remember, been in confinement not many months before.

'As to the *Selections from the Dramatists*, I think you must have overlooked a note of mine, telling how I followed Lamb's own precedent. When in 1818 he reprinted certain of the prefatory criticisms by *themselves*, he explained that he had chosen those which were most intelligible and interesting *when presented apart from the passages* quoted. So I followed his good lead (no doubt the *Selections* themselves ought to form a separate volume in my series).

'I hope we shall meet soon. Till then, once more accept my grateful acknowledgments.—Ever sincerely yours,

'ALFRED AINGER.'

To MR. BRITON RIVIÈRE.

'MASTER'S HOUSE,
'TEMPLE, E.C., *November* 7, 1900.

'MY DEAR RIVIÈRE,—The couplet from Chaucer's translation of the *Roman de la Rose* (l. 4931) that I spoke to you of on Monday evening is this:

"In gret perell is set youthede (youth),
Delite so doth his bridil leede."

The image presented of Delight leading the bridle of the unhappy youth—in contrast with your noble knight himself directing his steed into the path of danger and mystery in pursuit of some noble duty or purpose—"In manus tuas"—seems to me a fine subject for a companion picture, at least when in the hands of a fine poetic imagination like yours. Forgive my presumption.—Ever your sincere,

ALFRED AINGER.'

To MR. MOWBRAY DONNE.

'MASTER'S HOUSE,
'TEMPLE, E.C., *Dec.* 26, 1900.

'MY DEAR MOWBRAY,—My best thanks to my old friend for his kind note, and for his charming gift of Cowper's portrait, which I rejoice to have, for I am an old lover of the poet, and the love strengthens with years. He has got the ever-blessed gift of

Charm—which (and *not* as commonly asserted, style) is Time's true "antiseptic."

'Our love and best wishes for Christmas and the New Year (I must not, in your case, say the new Century)—to you and Mrs. Mowbray. We are in the throes of preparation for moving to Clifton next week.—Ever your attached, ALFRED AINGER.'

To Mrs. Andrew Lang.

'2 CODRINGTON PLACE, CLIFTON,
'BRISTOL, *Saturday Evening, Feb.* 2, 1901.

'MY DEAR MRS. LANG,— . . .

'"Friend after friend departs." Now poor little Haweis is gone —so bound up with the old Sydenham days. I have hardly seen a sympathetic word about him in any newspaper or weekly. To-day's *Spectator* and *Pilot* are dumb. Did you know him? He was a well-meaning little fellow, with a real faculty for writing, but without a grain of tact or judgment, and who dashed himself to pieces among the rocks of self-advertisement. I was at his wedding when he married Miss Joy (who, we agreed, evidently did not wish to be "a joy for ever")—and we called the tiny couple "a fortuitous concurrence of atoms"—and then J. R. Green and Willie von Glehn and I drove back to Sydenham to hear Mendelssohn's Reformation Symphony.

'And now this evening I hear my dear old friend Dr. Hopkins, fifty years the organist of the Temple, is dying—and I loved him very much. He created the reputation of the Temple Service (musically) and composed lovely Services and Hymns. I ask with the Poet,

"Who next will drop and disappear?"

'Did you notice Farrar's amazing quotation about the Queen? He said "her death had eclipsed the gaiety of nations," which foolish flourish of rhetoric was said by Johnson of——David Garrick. It is *rather* hard on our departed Queen to class her with popular comedians! . . .

'How about the Magazine, and is A. L. going to enliven it a bit? It needs some one to provide a gaiety which shall not be eclipsed.

'Maggie sends her love. It is rather cheerless here, weather and all. And any gleams of light and leading will be welcomed.'

To Canon Beeching.

'2 Codrington Place,
'Clifton, Bristol, *Feb.* 28, 1901.

'My dear Beeching, . . .

'Yes, we detected "the sweet Roman hand" in the *Pilot*, and though a Cantab I forgive you any *arrière-pensées* that might be detected! Your Manchester article I also read in the new *Cornhill*, and it diverted me much. What a charming poem of Dixon's! and why do I not know that sweet poet better? Is he procurable in print? Godley, too, is excellent, all the charm of Gray and Cowper with the technical dexterity of Calverley (or shall I say Blaydes addressing an *Oxtab* as Nicholas would have called you)?

'I want to know *this* particularly. How does your experiment of Friday Lent services (with men of light pleading in the pulpit) succeed? I mean, do you get a *congregation*? I know they blame me at the Temple for not asking outsiders of mark to give the address, but I frankly tell them I will *not* ask men of eminence to give their time and labour, to find a mere handful of listeners awaiting them when they arrive. What do *you* think?

'I hope the *placens uxor* and not less *placentes filiolae* are well. How I look forward to Burford—though I know I must bring my own knife, fork, and spoon.

'Write me a line to say you smile as you were wont to smile. Ever yours, A. Ainger.'

'Master's House,
'Temple, E.C., *June* 6, 1901.

'My dear Beeching,—I don't want to be a churl, and I will come to the lunch on Tuesday next, and will "propoge" the College, and give some reminiscences—chiefly (I fear) of how I wasted my time there, or rather got a great deal of profit and enjoyment out of other things than those I was sent there to cultivate. What is the hour, and when do we meet? I do so long for a talk with you, but I fear nothing is possible till the term is over; the London season has indeed set in "with its usual severity."—Ever yours, Alfred Ainger.

PS.—I know you will be pleased to hear that our gracious King has appointed me one of the Twelve (not the Judas, I hope) in his reduced list of Chaplains in Ordinary.

To Mrs. Andrew Lang.

'Darley Abbey,
'Derby, *Sunday, Aug.* 11, 1901.

'Dear Mrs. Lang,—Thank you for your interesting letter with all its news. I am vegetating pleasantly here, spending my morning, however, over the first chapter of my *Crabbe* which I am doing for the "Men of Letters" series. I had a great fondness for that poet, when I used to read the selections from him, as a boy, in *Elegant Extracts,* and he touches and charms me still. If Andrew has any private stores of information on the subject, now is his kind opportunity. I am very glad he is going to protest against any more commentaries on *In Memoriam.* . . .

'Thanks for your excellent story of the "Quantities." I have nothing so good to send in return. But Bruce Richmond (of the *Times*) told us the other day of a "Memorial" Obituary notice at the end of the Deaths in that paper. It referred to the death of a gentleman's wife, to which the sorrowing widower appended the two quotations:—

"Her voice is heard no more."
"Peace, perfect Peace!"

No, Swift did not frame the lines as you quote them. They are (I think) from his "Ode to Poetry," and run thus:—

"——the Flea (pronounced 'flay')
Has other fleas that on him prey,
And these have smaller still to bite 'em,
And so go on *ad infinitum.*"

But it is always transposed into the "Big Flea" and "Little Flea" Stanza to which you refer. . . .'

To Mr. Horace Smith.

'I'm one of the twelve (selected) King's Chaplains and wear a special *button.* I call myself a great Panjandrum.

"With the little round button at top!"

'Darley Abbey, Derby,
'*Sunday, Aug.* 18, 1901.

'My dear Horace,—I ought to have sooner answered your welcome letter from Butterlip with all its news of the dear family and the dearest couple whom I lately started on the road of happiness. Where are they—and how are they? I want to

write and tell Nowell I have discovered the misprint I long sought for in his Wordsworth. I have now found it. I am glad to think he is only human after all. It is in the last stanza of *Hartleap Well*—

"One lesson, Shepherd, let us two DIVIDE."

'. . . I am writing a Life of Crabbe, for some fresh volumes of the "Men of Letters" series which the Macmillans are bringing out, and it is interesting me much. Do you know, I was much brought up on Crabbe, who was in my father's library when I was a boy, and I have a great fondness for him. If *you* have *too* (as I hope), let us exchange ideas. And don't turn round on me and quote—

"John Richard William Alexander Dwyer
Was footman to Justinian Stubbs Esq."

although it is one of the best parodies ever written—of Crabbe (*bien entendu*) at his lowest. But he has written beautiful things and there is nobody like him at describing a large and unlovely landscape.

'. . . Only room to greet the entire family. With all love and esteem, Your own, A. AINGER.'

To LORD TENNYSON in Australia.

'*Oct.* 22, 1901.

'. . . Poor Sidgwick has gone since you and I last met, and another link with your old home has been broken. "Who next will drop and disappear?" one finds oneself asking often.

'The minor poets struggle on—but as Beatrice said to Benedick, 'I wonder they will be talking, for nobody heeds them.' Kipling is the only man of anything like genius among them. The War killed books for a time: the flood of books is setting in again, but they are none of them literature—which indeed has ceased in the land. Novels come out by the thousand every month and, if only they are indecent enough and written by so-called ladies, they still prosper greatly. *O tempora—O mores!* I wonder if the Antipodes have better taste than to read such things! In any case put a guard on your drawing-room table.

'In Andrew Lang's little volume on your father, you will find some castigation given Frederic Harrison, who lately committed himself to the assertion that there was no original thought in *In Memoriam*, and that all that was best in it was got (*miserabile*

dictu) from Huxley, *Ecce Homo*, Herbert Spencer and others, who weren't born when the poem was written.'

To Mr. Horace Smith.

'Master's House,
'Temple, E.C., *Nov.* 1, 1901.

'My dearest Horace,—I *am* a brute-beast—and I can't say fairer than that! I have been going to write to you ever so many times, but partly owing to the postponement of our Church opening, I have been tempted to take some extra vacation (I was with the Halsburys last Sunday in Suffolk) and this has knocked many virtuous resolutions on the head. I wanted to tell yon among hosts of other matters, how excellent I thought your parody on Wordsworth in *Punch* (weeks ago), in which Campbell Bannerman invites Harcourt and Morley to take holiday. I became livid with envy when I read it, and *knew* it must be you. For you have a special flavour in parody which none of the professional wags have achieved. . . .

'We open our Church on Sunday, and should be glad to see a good muster of Benchers on the occasion. A lovely short anthem of Wesley's, and Services to match. I hope we shall be warm, after spending so much time and hard-earned money on the new machinery. I had a thought of preaching from a text good old Bishop Lonsdale used to quote—

> '"Hot water! ah!—a very good thing in a church—a *very bad thing* in a Parish!"

'I have several side-splitting anecdotes awaiting you—but they are perishable and the aroma would disappear in the Post.

'Love to you all—and to the two old married folks at Oxford.

'Crabbe is simmering nicely—and I have even written some of it in the rough.—Your affectionate,

'Alfred Ainger.'

To Mrs. Andrew Lang.

'Master's House,
'Temple, E.C., *Dec.* 4, 1901.

'. . . I suppose Henley's attack on R. L. S. has reached your ears even in your *Ultima Thule*. Strange that H. should not have foreseen the storm of abuse it must inevitably bring about

his ears, and quickly. On hearing of it I took out my pocket-book and instantly produced the following:—

"De mortuis nil nisi malum."
"They can't hit back, so let's assail 'em";

which, however, is but a poor pendant to what suggested it, the words of a modern Irish wit, with a truly Swiftian power of rhyming:—

"De mortuis nil nisi bonum."
"When scoundrels die we'll all bemoan 'em."

I hear that Andrew has written an excellent paper lately in the *Morning Post.* May I see it? . . .

'I have been greatly struck with the *House with the Green Shutters* you so kindly lent us. Its power is marvellous—of the Balzac order. One wants now to know more about him, and to see whether he can treat a *Love* interest, let us say, and whether he can draw *nice* characters and normal ones. There is one brief incident in the story—of a Scotch minister who has got into the ministry by the skin of his teeth and who discusses a certain Professor he remembered in his student days—"I always thocht he was just a wee bit too fond of Hegel!" which struck me as exquisite. I hear his name is Brown. Can you hear any more about him?'

To the Same.

'8 Victoria Square,
'Clifton, *Jan.* 6, 1902.

'. . . I have been reading an article, *so* amateurish and commonplace, about the "Best and Second Best in Literature," suggested, I fancy, by a paper of Andrew's. How *idiotic* to suggest that the popularity of Mr. Quiller Couch or Anthony Hope could possibly be thought to diminish one's interest in *Milton*! Who ever propounded such folly? The two are not "in pari materia," as the lawyers say. But I am certain it is the second-rate novelists of to-day (*so* clever and fluent, with the marks of their doom upon their foreheads) who make the poor fools of readers undervalue and neglect Dickens and Thackeray.'

To Miss Roscow.

'Master's House,
'Temple, E.C., *Tuesday, April* 15, 1902.

'Dearest Child, . . . I had a bad day yesterday—but with the aid of oysters and other stimulants I am gradually recovering.

The truth is, I had an exhausting day on Sunday, and thus it came about. On arriving at the Chapel Royal about a quarter to twelve, I was met by the Sub-Dean with the intelligence that he had only just before had a message from the King that he was coming to the twelve o'clock service. He usually, when he was Prince of Wales, came to the Matins at ten. But as he had stayed at Buckingham Palace since his return from his cruise on Saturday, I suppose he found ten rather early. To my horror, the Sub-Dean added:—'You must preach a short sermon, not more than a quarter of an hour; twelve minutes would be better!' Well—what was to be done? I had only one sermon with me (the one I preached at Bristol *à propos* of Miss Peveril Turnbull) and I could do nothing in the way of re-arrangement in a quarter of an hour. However, I saw that I might omit the first two pages—and then saw I must do the rest by extreme rapidity in delivery. Fortunately, clear articulation at motor-car speed is among my talents. So I did this; and his Majesty stayed till the end. It had been arranged with the Dean that if the King had left before the sermon, I should be told, so that I need not then hurry.

'Well, it came to an end, and I got out of the Chapel, much exhausted and rather with a sense of having lowered myself by what I had done. However, friends whom I met outside, Lord Aberdeen and Dr. Farquharson, were very kind, and the former, who asked me to let him ride with me in my cab for part of my way home, was most encouraging, and said the audience were much impressed, in spite of my galloping through. . . . Since my lunch (of oysters!) Walford has been in to try over the *Ancient Mariner* with music. We sat in the drawing-room amid a wreck of dust-sheets and dislocated furniture.'

To the Same.

'Master's House,
'Temple, E.C., *Wednesday afternoon, June,* 1902.

'Dearest Child, . . . I sat with —— while he took breakfast (10 A.M.), and then walked on to the Abbey for the 11 o'clock rehearsal. Much more brilliant than Monday—for the peers all had their robes and coronets, and the colours were splendid. The old archbishop was in excellent voice. There were lots of bishops about, all in dazzling vestments. I hear from the Sub-Dean that the new *Rock* newspaper has attributed the national chastisement of the King's illness and postponement

of the coronation to—what do you think?—the use of *Copes* on the occasion! But they were at it again to-day, quite unabashed.'

To Mr. Lockwood (Vicar of Widford).

'Master's House,
'Temple, E.C., *June*, 1902.

'My dear Lockwood, I have been long—terribly long—in acknowledging your welcome letter with the photographs, for which I sincerely thank you. . . . I am truly ashamed of myself, though the Coronation, with all the preparations for it, must be allowed to bear part of the blame—for such things do not happen every day. And now! It is all to come over again at some other time. I was to have been, as you perhaps know, at the head of the procession with the other chaplains, and had had made such a gorgeous costume—with scarlet cassock and mantle, (provided in part at the King's cost)!! I went to two rehearsals—and had just been summoned to a third when the terrible news burst upon us like a bolt from the blue.'

To Miss Sturge.

'Colwyn Bay,
'North Wales, *September* 13, 1902.

'. . . I am glad you saw my letters originally addressed to the *Pilot*, and some day, if all's well, I will show you a most interesting letter I received, in consequence, from a firm of "brass band music publishers" in Liverpool, who spend their time in arranging the music of the great musical classics for poor men's bands, and who tell me they made the very arrangement from Schubert that I heard in Lincoln's Inn Fields! I have sent the letter to Dr. Walford Davies, our Temple organist, or I would have enclosed it to you now.'

To Mr. Horace Smith.

'Master's House,
'Temple, *Nov.* 19. 1902.

'Dearest Horace, . . . I look forward to the *Almanack* which I see is announced for December 1. About *Bradshaw* is it? Do you remember my suggested alteration in *Hamlet*:—"I am but mad north-north-west; when the wind's southerly, I know a book from a *Bradshaw*!"

'—— told me a good story on Sunday evening:—Sergeant is interviewing recruit as to what religious denomination he belongs to: Man says he is not a member of *any*. "Why not?" "*Because I don't believe anything.*"

'"None of your nonsense, sir. Then understand—*until you do*, you're a member of the Church of England."

'Tell me what are your favourite passages in *Crabbe*. I am writing that poet's life, and want a few brilliant criticisms to liven it up.

'So glad you liked my article on Tennyson. —— is a very brilliant fellow, but I fear he is a little like the above *Recruit*.

'. . . The two societies have consented to put the electric light into this house. They acceded to my request at once. "Where they *do* agree in the Temple, their unanimity is wonderful!" But I am very grateful. . . . Ever your affectionate

'Alfred Ainger.'

To the Same.

'8 York Place,
'Clifton, Bristol, *Friday, Feb.* 20, 1903.

'Dearest Horace, A thousand thanks for the Psalms and Hymns. They are many of them very beautiful—and better than beautiful—and I could hardly read some of them without tears. And I thank God, my "oldest and best friend" (which I heartily reciprocate), that as we grow on to old age, we are not losing touch with the only thoughts and hopes that make life worth living. I shall make our excellent Walford Davies play over these tunes to me when I get back to the Temple, and already I have passed the "Key-stone" of the arch that bridges the interval here (to quote Burns), and the "mezzo del cammin," to borrow from Dante.

'I sat up by the fire and read your volume after coming back from the Lord Mayor's dinner to the Judges. (It is assize time.)'

To Mr. Herbert Paul.

'*April* 8.

'I strongly suspect that you are now so familiar a presence at the Temple Church that you may safely run the gauntlet of all the vergers without a card. I think I should advise you to try this course next time. Then, if any pampered minion disputes

your entrance, draw your card from your waistcoat pocket, and

"Strike him dead for thee and me!"'

To Mr. Bosworth-Smith.

'Master's House,
'Temple, E.C., *Friday, July* 24, (1903?)

'My dear Bosworth-Smith,—(May we not drop prefixes? I will if you will, as Edward FitzGerald used to say!)

'A few weeks ago you most kindly wrote me a line, telling me of your new paper in the *Nineteenth Century*. . . . At the time I could not get access to the Review, but at a friend's house at Hampstead this week I met with it, and promptly read your charming article. I was delighted, and look forward to many more from your hand, and to their appearance in a collected form. I fear, had I been with you, I could not have contributed any anecdotes this time. The pluck of a sparrow in renovating his home under trying circumstances has indeed been celebrated in a sailor's song, but the language so much savours of the briny, that I fear it could not have been submitted to Knowles' *clientèle*, even in the elegant elegiacs into which it was turned by an ingenious Shrewsbury scholar—one verse of which I recall:—

"Sanguinolentus erat (si vera est fabula) passer
Cui fuit in plumbo sanguinolenta domus;
Sanguinolenta ruit demissa tonitrua coelo
Evulsitque tuam, parve Cinæde, domum!"

The second concluding verse dealt with the fact that when the disreputable bird observed that the rain had ceased, he promptly 'built up there again."'

To Mr. Barclay Squire.

(In answer to an invitation to a dinner given in honour of Mr. Lathbury, the Editor of *The Pilot*.)

'Master's House,
'Temple, E.C., 1903.

'. . . It would have been a real pleasure to me to show in any manner my respect and regard for Mr. Lathbury and my admiration for the skill and pluck, the patience and perseverance, with

which he has conducted the enterprise with which his name will ever be associated.

'For myself, I feel terribly unworthy to be associated with the *Pilot*, for Mr. Lathbury has often, I know, wept over the inadequacy of my ecclesiastical sympathies. I have the misfortune to be one of those "Moderates" who in England, as in Scotland, have always been held in well-deserved contempt. But, though I belong partly to the West of England, if I am not a Mr. Leeper, I at least am not a Plymouth Brother, and our esteemed editor has always winked very hard at my shortcomings.

'I only wish I could have helped him at all in other topics, but I have not the pen of a ready writer; as the Scotch subeditor "jocked," so I "write," with "deeficulty." But I yet hope when certain other literary engagements are fulfilled, to have the honour and the privilege now and again of appearing in Mr. Lathbury's columns. I know no literary journal of higher aims, and that can boast a higher standard of literary achievement —and I am proud to have been allowed the place of even the humblest of its contributors.'

CHAPTER XVII

THE PREACHER

'Do not think me merely professional, if I say that I regard my sermons as my chief work in life,'—so Ainger said in his later years. And it was as a preacher that during those years he mainly figured. When he became Master of the Temple, his friends often told him that they should not dare to jest with him as heretofore; and though they meant it in sport, there was a good deal of truth in their words. Always sensitive to the dignities of office, he felt to the full the weight and seriousness of his position. His appointment, it is true, came to him at a period when he was beginning to feel older. Social success had been his, his best literary work was done, and he neither possessed the facility in writing nor the need to express himself which impels some men to go on with authorship. A career of usefulness to his fellows in the state to which he was called seemed to him what was now desirable; while the improvement in health and equability which the last years had brought him made him no longer so dependent upon the distractions of society. His graver qualities, always there, now came uppermost; his brilliant sallies grew less frequent and were generally reserved for his intimates. In other circles, when some familiar face or old association struck a sudden spark from him, he would still occasionally break forth into drollery or impersonation; but, generally speaking, it may be said that those who met him only after 1894 did not know the real Alfred Ainger. And this, upon his part, was, as we have seen, the result of a deliberate resolution to renounce all that was not consonant with his position and with the Christian forbearance it demanded. Wit, as he was fond of repeating both in public and in private, was incompatible with kindness or with a sincere religious standard;

and wit he tried to abandon, as far as he was able—though, happily for his friends, the ability was not always there. In other directions also he made for consistency, refusing to write upon subjects that did not suit with his conception of himself. 'No, I cannot write humorous articles for you now that I am Master of the Temple,' he replied to a petitioning editor, and he did not break his resolve.

All the more could he concentrate his powers upon his preaching, and the last ten years of his life produced some of the finest sermons that he wrote. Both in London and in Bristol, where he repeated his Temple sermons, he drew crowded congregations and a large number of men. Yet a popular preacher he never could have been; his strength and his weakness alike prevented it. He had a fastidious refinement, a beautiful power of expression, but he rather disliked eloquence. He excelled in clarity of thought and diction, rather than in originality or motive power; in a quiet and practical piety suited to the needs of every day, but not in the fire that converts sinners and creates enthusiasm. His gifts were not those that appeal strongly to the poor, or to any man or class in storm or stress, and it was not surprising to find that his audiences were composed almost exclusively of cultivated people. His refusal to use any kind of bait in order to attract the public amounted, in him, to courage; he would always rather be dull than swerve from strict truth and justice. And his moderation alone would have excluded him from popularity. Extremes offended him. Very High Churchmen and very Low Churchmen were both distasteful to him, though ritualism came in for the larger share of his impatience. But he could, when he tried, be just even to extremes and to the tenets that went most against his grain. 'I am quite aware of the inevitable corruption of Saint-worship,' he wrote in 1883, 'how it *must* degenerate into a machinery for getting something for oneself; but at the same time a Protestant abhorrence of it is an ignoble thing.' Nothing afflicted him more than party spirit, or the easy approbation that attended it. 'Dr. Temple,' he once said, 'was never a party man and

therefore no party specially idolised him. This is the fate of all men who are early disgusted with the falsehood of extremes and are keen to avoid them.'

Canon Ainger's conception of preaching, however, needs no explanation from the outside. He himself has defined it.

'St. Paul's method was not that of the bigot who, framing his message in the shortest possible terms, cries, "Take that and be saved; or reject it and be lost." For St. Paul was a lover of men as well as a lover of God; though he could not have loved men so much had he not loved God more. His method, therefore, was not to present, as it were, a pistol to their breasts, but to commend to them the message he was charged with; to show its reasonableness, its necessity, its justice, as well as its beauty and its compassionateness, by appealing in turn as witnesses to every faculty of mind, heart, and spirit with which God had endowed them. For he had learned, as every faithful preacher must surely learn when in contact with a living, throbbing humanity, that his own soul, heart, and intellect must enter into the great work he is sent to do. He must be a preacher; but to be that he must be a teacher also. . . . He has to deal alternately with the highest mysteries of Christian theology, and with the humblest and most prosaic duties of the family and the home . . . to rebuke fiercely, without fear or favour; to exhort, to control, to plead, to touch the heart and the emotions, and to lift the hearer into the region of the divine by that noblest eloquence, the eloquence of a passionate enthusiasm for all that is lovely and of good report.'

'This was the idea and the method of Paul the Apostle. . . . And that which runs through and binds together the whole like a thread of gold is the absolute sincerity and singleness of purpose of the man, which shames the most hostile critic from suggesting that he is ever playing his own game . . . ever using language that will captivate, as language, irrespective of the truth it conveys.'[1]

Thus much for the preacher; what follows is for the congregation.

'Just as the eye must bring with it the power of seeing, so the ear must bring its power of hearing, which is but its will to hear. Believe it well—only the cold-hearted and unspiritual will underrate the office of the preacher. Only the fool and the flippant

[1] 'Preaching' (*The Gospel and Human Life*).

will laugh at it. For though there may be sermons that are perfunctory and unprofitable, still, just as we are not so illogical as to deny that we have learned from the poets because much poetry is mediocre, so we shall hardly decline to be thankful to the pulpit for its successes merely because of its many and inevitable failures.'[1]

And it was not only from the pulpit that Canon Ainger spoke of preaching. His letters, especially such as deal with the sermons of others, throw light on what he made for in his own. The following notes are to Mr. Louis Dyer, the husband of his old friend, Maggie Macmillan, who had now settled at Oxford:—

'HAMPSTEAD, *May* 31, 1893.

'MY DEAR DYER,—I fear I must not accept the flattering invitation of you and your colleagues to speak at the P. Brooks meeting. The truth must be told; I am *not* a very great admirer of his sermons—and it is only through his sermons that I know anything of him. I will tell you one day why he fails to move me. When I saw his earliest volume I was immensely struck, and indeed it was I who first told the Firm in Bedford Street that they ought to get hold of his books, which you know they did. But as I read more of him, I found he did not satisfy me—for I am one of those old-fashioned ones who think a little *theology*, and a little *unction*, improve a sermon.

'I dare say I am utterly wrong; but in any case you will see what a wet blanket any speaker would be who was not in complete sympathy with the person whom the meeting sought to honour.

'Forgive me—and "pity my ignorance"—and believe that there is no question whatever of my love and respect for "the Church worshipping in Sunbury Lodge."[2]

'My love to all such Aquilas and Priscillas—(including Maggie and the (V) "Olney *Him.*")[3]—Yours ever, ALFRED AINGER.'

'*June* 3, 1893.

'MY DEAR DYER,—I am feeling rather conscience-stricken about my last letter to you, concerning Phillips Brooks. *Do* for-

[1] *The Gospel and Human Life.*

[2] The name of the Dyers' house at Oxford.

[3] An allusion to the Dyers' little son, Volney, whom Canon Ainger had christened.

give me, and ask Maggie to do the same. The truth is I owe "my own soul" to men so very different from your eloquent countryman, that I dare say I naturally underrate him. It was F. D. Maurice who did for *me* what you say P. B. did for *you*, and I was just now reading with a view to a sermon of my own one of Maurice's (in his *Christmas Day and other Sermons* volume), "Human Sorrow the best evidence of Christianity"; and if you will some day look at it you will understand the sort of teaching that affects me *most*, and indeed almost exclusively.

'Alas, *Quot homines tot sententiæ*—and I suppose the medicines for the soul that we require come through very different chemists' shops. At all events, forgive me, and believe that I am, always your and Maggie's affectionate and devoted friend, A. A.'

Ainger's preaching was more lucid than F. D. Maurice's, and his structural power was considerable. Mr. R. C. Browne, his old friend, whose memories have helped us so often, compares him to his predecessor, Hooker.

'I have listened to many discourses of his from that pulpit which once was Hooker's, and have mused on the contrast and affinity of the two preachers,' says this writer. 'To tired lawyers, in their brief Sabbath interval, with the hurrying murmur of the working-day world still in their ears, the theological predilections of old time would have been not merely unwelcome, but intolerable.

'But one peculiarity of Hooker is this. He may be urging some important consideration, dwelling on and developing it as he strictly pursues his argument. His readers may think him oblivious of other considerations as important, to the right or left of his course. He presently shows that he has not forgotten, has all the while borne in mind the whole lie of the country, and has taken the first opportunity to let them know it.

'In a different way Canon Ainger showed a like regard for the preoccupations of his hearers. He would enlarge on some high theme, not evidently one "coming home to their business and bosoms." But presently he came upon things he knew were in their minds—predominant topics—questions of the hour. These —not as "improving the occasion," but as lifting them to a higher plane—would be set in a clearer, diviner light than that of common day, showing clearly and unobtrusively their relations to the things of the spirit. And there would he leave the matter, without any wearying stress of exhortation.'

'What interested him most in religion,' as Canon Beeching points out,[1] 'was the character of Christ—its power of satisfying every need of man.'

'If God had not given us this witness (the Holy Spirit) in ourselves, I think no assurance, not the Bible itself, would make us believe. But I am sure that we have all felt a power within us, that has protested against the doubts and despairs of our life and has triumphed over them and has forced every one of us to cry aloud: "I know that Christ is true, for He offers me what I need and what no one else offers. The world cannot satisfy me. . . . I want that which will make me like in nature unto God."'

This passage is quoted from the first sermon Ainger preached after his ordination as priest, and he would not have altered a syllable of it on the last day of his life. No less characteristic are the words that follow:—'In religious knowledge, as in all other things, dare to be ignorant of many things, that you may have time and brain and heart for a few things.' The aphorism contains the essence of what he made for as a teacher, and on these 'few subjects' he never wearied of ringing the changes during the quarter of a century, and more, that he spoke from the Temple pulpit. But it must never be forgotten that the 'character of Christ,' as he conceived it, was unconditionally dependent upon Christ's divinity. He admitted of no 'broad' interpretations, no figurative modes of speech, no Christianity without dogmatic orthodoxy. The division of ethics from religion was peculiarly distasteful to him, and he could not bring himself to think that it could produce sound results, or that any but shallow natures believed in it.

'Having eliminated Heaven and Hell' (he says), 'the doctrine of the need of an atonement with God, and the hope of life eternal, we present the moral residuum for the consideration and acceptance of our audience. "It is good to be brotherly and sympathetic; it is good to deny self for others; it is good to be earnest and hard-working; it is good to be humble, and not to despise others who have not our cleverness and our culture."

[1] Preface to *The Gospel and Human Life.*

Here is our gospel; and we present it for the acceptance of the selfish man, who has been playing his own game and considering his own interests for so long, that the habit has become second nature; of the cynic who has grown old in scorn of all the 'windy ways of men"; of the intellectual student, who divides all outside his circle into fools and Philistines; for the bitter and discontented, who are unhappy unless they have a grievance; for the lounger through life, who never did, and never means to do, a stroke of work that he can help; who has accustomed himself to put on one side all the hardness of life, and to shirk every responsibility that interferes with his love of ease. The world is full of these; and we are told again and again that they are to be roused, if at all, not by a theology which as men of the world they know to be exploded, but by setting forth the great lesson that morality is after all identical with self-interest; or else that, as members of a social body, it is necessary to be moral in the general interest. . . . "Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good." A splendid and comprehensive cure for all the evils of the individual and of society—*if only it were followed.* But divorced from any assurance of power in us to follow it, or of hope of its ultimate attainment, it remains a piece of advice only, and not a gospel for sin-stricken humanity.'[1]

Or take this passage from another sermon :—

'"Christianity without Dogma"—this is the medicine, people say, for this age, and the only medicine which the sensible man will consent to take at the hands of the religious teacher of the future.

'Christ's morals, without any trouble as to Christ's own statements about Himself; Christ's morals without the Incarnation, without the Atonement, without the Resurrection: Christianity, in short, without Christ. But here, in the instance of this nobleman and of every other sufferer who came in the same way into connection with the Saviour, and was drawn toward Him, and made a new creature by Him, it was the precisely opposite state of things. Here was a man to whom not Christianity, but Christ, was the motive force which changed him, and lifted him out of darkness into light! . . . Look at Jesus Christ as the nobleman looked at Him, unencumbered with any metaphysics. Look at Him as the Fountain of *Health*—health of body and of soul; the

[1] 'The Enormous Influence of Character' (*The Gospel and Human Life*).

Pattern of all Goodness; the embodiment of a holiness which the greatest saint that ever has lived since has found infinitely higher than himself can hope to attain. Look at Him as the Fountain of *Pity*—pity for His suffering and sinning fellows; the Fountain of *Love*—longing for each one of us—the publican and the harlot no less than the young agnostic and man of the world. It is this Interpreter of life, and Refuge for life's evils, that you are rejecting when you plead that you cannot be bothered with the intricacies of theology. Forget them for the moment, and turn instead to the Healer of the nobleman's son. And it may be, when you have learned what the nobleman learned from that contemplation, that even in the despised creeds and theologies of the divines you will there learn something of true and living that you had never suspected.'[1]

Perhaps the best of his sermons are those urging practical virtues—more especially humility and charity. And his own spiritual humility was among the most lovable things in him. 'What you say of my sermons,' he wrote to a friend, 'is naturally very interesting to me. If I hit *hard*, as you say, it is most assuredly because I am aiming blows at some sins or evil tendencies that I know of in myself and not in other people. I should aim very wide and hit very feebly if I had to guess from my imperfect judgments of my fellow-mortals.'

One of the evils that he warred against persistently and thought the worst danger of our times was arrogance of intellect; and two of his finest sermons, 'Culture and Temptation,' and 'The Life was the Light of Men,' deal more or less with this subject.

'It is thus' (he says in the second one) '. . . that we are seeking to reverse these words of St. John, and to say "the light was the life of men," instead of "the life was the light." And this is no jugglery of words, no nice distinction of priests or metaphysicians. "Life" is a greater thing than "light," for life is light transmuted into action. Between light and life there may be yet a great gulf fixed, because the one vital step has yet to be taken. . . . Light shows us a beautiful picture—one painted with divine truth and in divine colours; but it remains, or may remain, a mere picture, beautiful indeed, and by all men to be admired,

[1] 'Christ before Christianity' (*The Gospel and Human Life*).

until we have welcomed it and adopted it and taken it to live within our own affections and our own conscience. It is the Pygmalion statue, cold and dead as stone, until we have fallen in love with it; then, and only then, it warms into life—a breathing, moving, energising source of all future life and growth for ourselves and for others. Yes, for others; and here again is shown one vital difference between life and light. Light, if it try to live alone, may serve only to separate us from our fellows. Light without love may make us feel only our difference from our brethren, and plunge us into something like intellectual scorn or, at best, social intolerance towards others. . . . A great deal of love may lift the soul to Heaven, though accompanied by very little light; whereas a great deal of light, with very little love, may leave the soul still in outer darkness.'[1]

Humility and Charity were, in his eyes, inseparable.

'A very little intellect,' so he says elsewhere, 'makes a great show where it stimulates the subtle pride of being superior to common humdrum folks. Do we any longer ask what Charity should have to do with these things, or with the cure of them? Just imagine a sudden passion of real love for one's kind reaching the dead conscience of the writer, or the reader, of such stuff. Would not the pen fall from the hand of the one, and the book from the hand of the other, and would not both sink down in shame and remorse before the felt presence of an outraged God and an outraged neighbour?'[2]

Charity, as we know, he thought, incompatible with wit—and none knew the dangers of wit better than he did. His austerity on the subject is some measure of the restraint that he put upon his own tongue. Upon this theme, and upon the charitable nature of humour, he was never tired of dwelling, whether as preacher or as lecturer—for his lecture of 1895 on Falstaff is little more than an embroidery of this text.

'. . . The gift of ridicule and the love of it; the habit of scorning the words and ways of others; the constant flow of persiflage; the cynicism which seeks to gain a reputation for freedom from the failings and follies of others—these, as experi-

[1] 'The Light was the Life of Men' (*The Gospel and Human Life*).
[2] 'Character and Intellect' (*Ibid.*).

ence shows, do not leave unaffected the spirit of tenderness and earnestness which together make up the Christ-like nature. . . .'[1]

Thus, from the Temple pulpit, he summed up his feelings on the subject.

One leading characteristic in these sermons, indeed in Ainger's whole nature, is his conviction of sin—an old-fashioned conviction, in a day which resents gloom and turns sin into a helpless malady. But at all times of life it beset him, though it often seemed incongruous with his temperament and as if it were a random legacy left him by his Huguenot forefathers. To ignore it is to ignore a key that explained much that was bewildering in him. It went for a great deal in his unyielding orthodoxy. Weighed down by the sense of sin, urged by the necessity of a sure relief, he felt that he found it alone in Christ and in the doctrine of Redemption; and the strength of his personal needs made him turn away from any thought or study that might lead to the weakening of his stronghold.

'But I am sick and I am sad,
And I need Thee, O Lord !'

This had been his answer to the preacher of 'modern sermons' in the poem of his earlier days, and the words sound the refrain of his spiritual life from first to last. Nor did his conviction of sin act only as a deterrent; it gave him an incentive to action.

'One sometimes feels,' runs one of his sermons, 'there is a religion common among people, even people of a high-minded character, not lax in its conception of the sacredness of duty and the beauty of goodness, avowing honestly indeed a belief that morality is far more important than dogma, and capable of genuine admiration for things lovely and of good report; which yet has lost in a great measure, what to religious men of old time was the natural and inevitable accompaniment of all this, a *loathing* of and *sorrowing* for that which is the opposite of these things. Admiration and praise for what is excellent seems to be surviving the capacity for mourning over and hating what is evil. Many in our day are bold enough to maintain that morality is not

[1] 'The Religious Aspect of Wit and Humour' (*Sermons preached in the Temple*).

in danger, even if religion be given up as incredible and obsolete. . . . They seem to think that they can live by admiration, but this is a maimed and partial view of the ends at which religion aims. The end and aim of religion is not to *admire* what is highest, but to *love* what is highest. And these are very different things. Admiration may mean only standing still; it is the attitude of watching, comparing, cultivating a taste. It is an æsthetic quality, not a moral, still less a spiritual. Love is an ardent desire to attain and to possess: it is not a standing still, but a pressing on; not only a stretching forth the hands *ripæ ulterioris amore*, but an urging forward of the steps, struggling and weary, but not hopeless, toward that beloved, much longed-for shore. There is no necessary instinct of progress in admiration, and therefore no necessary sorrow at non-attainment. . . . Love is a being drawn toward the thing loved, with a desire to resemble it and to be absorbed into it; and with this is of necessity bound up a grief, a pain, a shame at one's own unworthiness.'[1]

Of all Ainger's utterances, one thing may safely be averred. He dealt best with practical and not with intellectual issues: he was morally, more than mentally, stimulating. The great religious axiom that a creed is only proved by living it, and that faith must mean a working method, filled him, often to the exclusion of deep thought.

'Who,' he asks, 'will say that the knowledge of what the Christian Creed has effected upon the wills and affections of sinful men, is not one of the most, perhaps the most potent evidence for the truth of that creed? I am sure that this is so. Who is there of us who, when we are oppressed by doubts and difficulties; by the arguments of this or that writer; by the weight of the silences of God,—has not found comfort and fresh life in dwelling upon some historic name, or perhaps some friend or relation or teacher whose character has been made beautiful through this very faith that for the moment we are inclined to put away from us?'[2]

Ainger's spiritual common sense was perhaps his strongest quality—this and his moral insight, which was profound and far-reaching. But he looked at all things—art, science,

[1] 'Love and Sorrow' (*The Gospel and Human Life*).
[2] 'The Enormous Influence of Character.'—*Ibid.*

literature—through moral spectacles, and this tendency was bound to injure thought; apart from the fact that his mind hardly belonged to this century, that he almost had a fear of science. It is strange that when he mentions any doubter, he generally assumes that he must be either a shallow person, or else an unhappy one. Of the deep-souled questioner, of the man who is spiritually happy although he is heterodox, his knowledge seems to be defective. And if such people had questioned him, his replies would hardly have seemed adequate. Take, for instance, this passage:—

'Probably the popular idea of a suffering creation, as distinct from man, is of a world in which floods, fires, earthquakes, tornadoes, at intervals or habitually, scar the fair face of nature, and wreck millions of human lives. Or again, of a world in which the tiger prowls, and the serpent stings, and where the big and strong of the animal world prey upon the weak; where "Nature is one with rapine," where "the mayfly is torn by the swallow, the sparrow speared by the shrike." How far, or in what way, these pangs and apparent iniquities of Nature are connected with the wreck of man's primal innocence we cannot say, and we dare not dogmatise. God has revealed to us in His word no glimpse of these things. Why the jungle is the jungle we cannot pronounce, and we are taught in the most solemn of all assurances, that the tens of thousands who perish by earthquake are not necessarily more sinners than those who live on the slopes of some fair English stream. But it is not necessary to fathom these mysteries, which are no less part of creation, and of which ourselves have habitual experience.'[1]

And the paragraph that follows would hardly be a satisfying answer for a Christian Socialist from one who would convince him of error:—

'It very soon appears from the pages of the Acts of the Apostles that various disciples possessed their own houses and other properties; and this is inconsistent with the interpretation of this passage[2] as an abnegation of the first condition and

[1] 'Subject to Vanity' (*The Gospel and Human Life*).

[2] 'All that believed were together and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need' ('Wiclif': *The Gospel and Human Life*).

necessity of civilised life—possessions, and responsibility for their use. . . . But there is no word of encouragement for those who would reduce men again to savagery, by neutralising the vast differences of moral quality and intellectual power among men; who would attempt to set at naught the eternal law of God that integrity and industry and self-denial mean success, and that intemperance and sloth and dishonesty mean failure.'

It is natural that one so out of touch with modern difficulties should not have been the person to whom the rising generation turned for counsel; and it was to the middle-aged, who ask for help and consolation in the duties and anxieties of every day, that he most effectually appealed.

But on all who heard him, the beauty of his diction and delivery exercised what may be called a deep spiritual charm. And if we study his sermons—so quiet that we hardly realise their eloquence—we can cull from them an anthology of sayings which serve the turn both of young and old. Perhaps we can choose no better way of finally summing up his teaching than by gathering in a few of these maxims. We give them without further comment, taking them from both the volumes that contain his Temple sermons.

'We may mistake trust in our clique for trust in our belief; and trust in our belief for trust in God.'

'If religion does not mend us here, it mars us.'

'Times change; standards of orthodoxy vary; forms of persecution have their day and cease to be; but two things remain the same, the will and nature of God and the heart of mankind.'

'Though a brave man must needs be alone in the world, it does not follow that he who chooses to walk alone is therefore brave. There is a solitude in which we may be, not alone with God, but alone with *self*.'

'People in general do not examine with particular care the soundness of arguments alleged in support of their own theories.'

'Only he who loves much knows what it is to feel that anger which is ennobling and Godlike.'

'It is comparatively easy to make a person or a cause ridiculous, when a solid refutation of them would not be possible.'

'The practice of seeking out the ludicrous side of things and ignoring all other is a kind of insolence. It is a refined method of expressing contempt for the serious interests of human nature.'

'Other-worldliness has been as self-absorbing as worldliness, and as valueless in its effect upon others.'

'Man has been called a "microcosm," a little world; what the Pharisee needed to realise was that in every man and woman was comprised a little Heaven, or a little Hell. And this new point of view of his kind could only be won by shifting his moral standpoint, his moral outlook; by standing side by side with Jesus of Nazareth, and looking with His eyes upon the sin and sorrow-defaced forms and faces of poor human nature.'

'A religion without love is a religion without sorrow. . . . A cheerful religion is a more popular type than a sorrowful one. "Forgetting the things that are behind" is a counsel of the Apostle's that falls upon willing ears, which too easily overlook that he was only speaking of past failures.'

'Duty awakening Love: Love awakening Duty—this ever-working action and reaction is surely the one infallible sign and evidence of the Christian Faith being still alive and a Power among us. It is at the root still of all Christian vitality; and it is this close relation between the two—either being indispensable to the full prosperity of the other—that gives us the means of judging each, when they appear to be trying each to do without the other.'[1]

'It is something indeed to be thankful for, if the world will even recognise a God *outside of us*—but how almost never does it take account of the God *within us*!'

'Whatever, in our pride of intellect and our joy in imagining we have outgrown the narrow views and superstitions of our forefathers, we may choose to announce to our fellows as the position we ourselves have taken up, we know in our hearts that such characters as these are simply the fruit by which the tree itself may be judged.'

'Better to fight for Christ in the ways in which the Templars fought, than to recognise no cause as having claim upon us other

[1] 'Love, the Foundation of the Law and the Prophets'—a sermon published separately and preached in the Temple on the first Sunday in Advent, 1897, the Sunday following the death of Baron Pollock.

than to get through life with the maximum of enjoyment and the minimum of pain.'[1]

'Truisms really need more constant urging than truths. Education, meaning by that, the putting into the hands of any being or class a power, a knowledge, before unattained, can have no force to abolish temptation, or to diminish its strength. All it can do is to remove the recipient from one stratum of temptation to another.'

'When we talk vaguely of what education is to do for a people, and what a new resource it places in their hands, we overlook the fact that the large majority of those who will receive it must ever be commonplace, unimaginative, unintellectual folks; leading dull, monotonous, exhausting lives, with little margin for the pursuit of book learning, even if they had the inclination for it. The ploughman, the bricklayer, the domestic servant, the toiling mother of a large family, will find the labour which each day presents absorb the whole of their time and energy. If we are to educate the children of our poor, we are educating them for lives of unceasing mechanical toil. What is education to do for them unless, above all else, it teaches them the relative value of things; to distinguish what is good and permanent from what is evil and passing away?'

'In the Parables you must make for the one point Christ meant to teach and take the rest as simply a surrounding story without moral intent.'[2]

'Let us, while we turn to God's Word to learn the secrets of our spiritual being, not linger upon questions which minister to strife and envying. And when our earth has played its part in the economy of the universe, and is seen by the few spheres which are within its ken to pass away as a wandering fire, Right and Wrong will not have lost their primeval significance; and the souls which have yearned and laboured for rest in the home of spirits will find that rest in Him who was and is and is to be.'

As we write down these bare extracts, they call out for his voice and his presence, for that quiet, vibrating quality of

[1] 'The Knights of the Red Cross.' Sermon preached on the seven hundredth anniversary of the consecration of the Temple Church, 1885.

[2] This is not quoted from a sermon, but from a conversation about the Parable of the Unjust Judge which he had with Mrs. Andrew Lang.

tone which made his reading so unique. These are things that none who heard him can forget—that none who did not hear him can realise. But his distinction, his function as a preacher, can be understood without them. If Canon Ainger most helped the minds that had no fundamental difficulties, he helped these effectually. If he did not exactly kindle a flame, he kept a flame alive. And he taught the men and women who bore it aloft, that only by quietness and steadiness could they hope to keep it alight. This he succeeded in doing because he knew their hearts so well; because he understood the needs of human nature. For the words that he once used when speaking of Dr. Vaughan, might equally be spoken of himself:—

'Putting on one side' (they run) 'the unfailing freshness of thought and treatment; the grace, always dignified and elevated . . . putting, I say, on one side these partly intellectual endowments, which never in themselves alone could win and retain the allegiance of the hearer, may I not speak of those "yet more excellent gifts," the deep understanding of the human heart, the singular power of reading the conscience, the detecting of the many sophistries of the human will; the laying of the hand on them, never without tenderness, with "*here* thou ailest, and *here*"? And last, but surely not least among such gifts, the rare and blessed one of moderation, seeking ever to avoid the falsehood of extremes.'

This passage, from one of his Temple sermons,[1] forms no unfitting close to a chapter on his work as a preacher.

[1] 'Preaching' (*The Gospel and Human Life*).

CHAPTER XVIII

LATER WRITINGS

'I HAVE been to Dilke's this morning, and returned with a lot of Hood MSS. of great interest: and I begin to hope that I may yet unravel the problem of his sad life of difficulty and suffering.' Thus wrote Canon Ainger when he first set to work upon his edition of Thomas Hood—he never allowed him to be called 'Tom,' a familiarity which, as he points out, was not used in the poet's lifetime. In the pages of biography with which he prefaces the edition, Ainger realised the hope which he expresses. 'I almost think it is my best piece of prose thus far,' he said, seven years after it was published; and if some lovers of his *Life of Charles Lamb* will hardly agree that it is his best, they will perhaps admit that it ranks as his completest bit of work. He himself wished to write a longer study on the same subject. A *Life of Hood* for the 'English Men of Letters Series' was the last task that he contemplated, a few weeks before his death, and it certainly would have shown us no falling off in his admiration. To hear Hood depreciated as a poet always roused his opposition. 'When you have read his sad and struggling history, you will think differently of him,' he once wrote to a friend who did not place Hood's genius high enough; and here he sounds that note of personal liking which always had so much to do in deciding his literary affinities. This predilection of his for Hood's poetry must seem an old-fashioned one to modern minds. 'I remember, I remember,' 'Stitch, stitch, stitch,' and 'We watched her breathing through the night,' are lyrics now so hackneyed that the present generation is apt too much to overlook their beauty and their freshness; nor do we, who live in these days of realism, sufficiently appreciate the forcible originality which went to the creation of such a poem as 'The

Song of the Shirt'—a poem, it should be remembered, which was written before the time of *Alton Locke*. But, for the bulk of Hood's poetical work, its unevenness must be admitted, and it cannot be denied that Ainger's love for its author often made him overrate it. This is especially the case with many of the humorous poems, beginning with the celebrated *Miss Kilmansegg*, the fun of which seems too elaborate, too dependent upon verbal quips, to move us to-day to real laughter. Perhaps Canon Ainger's sympathy with it was largely due to the fact that he felt Hood's wit akin to his own. The last jest that he ever uttered, a few days before his death, was one that Thomas Hood made on a similar occasion—the application of a mustard plaster. 'A great deal of mustard to very little meat,' Hood had said, and Ainger enjoyed repeating the words. Both men had the gift for quick, unexpected analogy, the feeling for pathos which enhances wit, the genius for adapting quotations, above all, mastery of the art of punning. Nowhere has that art been more delicately analysed than in this memoir of the poet, or in the delightful little preface that Ainger once wrote to Hood's *Humorous Poems*. In either work he has with equal brilliance set forth all his theories of punning, its moral significance, its æsthetic uses. From the lesser of these two essays we have already quoted, but he plays round the same ideas with more leisure in the longer Introduction. 'Hood punned,' he says (and he might have said it of himself), 'because he could not help it. . . . His puns display that quality, in which they are unique, of falling naturally into their places, as if they had met the writer on his road, rather than had been sought out by him, as if, indeed, it would have been pedantic to avoid them, merely because they happened to be puns. Hood's puns, at their best, never leave on the reader the impression of having been led up to. Even in a serious mood, when his intention is undeniable, he has no fear lest the wit should lower or belittle the truth enforced. Hood's method, indeed, is wholly guiltless of cynicism, and in this respect, as in so many others, he is out of key with the so-called "new humour" of to-day.'

By the light of these ideas, no doubt, Hood's jokes seemed

more glorious in Ainger's eyes than they really were. Take, for instance, the famous pun upon Newgate, in the critical lines upon Elizabeth Fry's scheme of setting up her school in prison, instead of outside it.

> 'I like your carriage and your silken grey,
> Your dove-like habits and your silent preaching,
> But I don't like your Newgatory teaching.'

Even this verbal feat, which Coleridge called 'transcendent,' hardly appeals to us now as the highest form of wit. There are, however, other puns in the poems (the like of which Ainger, too, sometimes created) which flash a moral truth, or epitomise a character in a way unattainable by graver means.

'An even more thrilling and perhaps inevitable use of the double meaning of a word' (he continues), 'is to be found in a stanza from the 'Song of the Shirt' :—

> 'While underneath the eaves
> The brooding swallows cling
> As if to show me their sunny backs
> And *twit* me with the spring.'

This is probably the most pathetic pun in the language, and is in itself sufficient answer to those who would question the legitimacy of this form of wit in the hands of genius. And that Hood's peculiar faculty justifies the use of the word genius cannot, I think, be gainsaid. As a poet, he cannot indeed be placed in the first rank, or even in the second, but genius is no question of place in a class-list. Hood has a real individuality, which gives him the primary claim to the title; and he has charm and sincerity to boot. Through these things he lives and will live, when the manifold echoes of other poets, which abound in every generation, are died away and forgotten.'

Other links bound the younger to the elder humorist. Hood's sad story attracted Ainger, and small wonder that it did so. From the day that, at twenty-two, Hood was left with the whole charge of his four orphaned sisters, to his last struggles, twenty-four years after, with failure and poverty and heart-disease, Alfred Ainger follows his fortunes with never-failing love and with that understanding of the heart which

seems to lend simplicity to style. The sudden responsibility which thus fell on one so young and so poor was a point in common between the life of Hood and that of Lamb; and a point which must have especially come home to their biographer. One of the only lucky events in Thomas Hood's life was, indeed, his meeting with Charles Lamb, and his record of it is, to those who know it, worth more than many of his verses. He was already the sub-editor of Taylor and Hessey's magazine, when one day, as he sat correcting proofs in the office, 'the door opened and in came a stranger, a figure remarkable at a glance, with a fine head on a small spare body, supported by almost immaterial legs. He was clothed in sables of a bygone fashion, but there was something wanting—or something present—about him that certified that he was neither a divine, nor a physician, nor a schoolmaster. . . . He looked . . . like (what he really was) a literary modern antique, a new-old author, a living anachronism, contemporary at once with Burton the elder and Colman the younger. Meanwhile he advanced with rather a peculiar gait, his walk was plantigrade, and with a cheerful "How d'ye?" and one of the blandest, sweetest smiles that ever brightened a manly countenance, held out two fingers to the editor. . . . After the literary business had been settled, the editor invited his contributor to dinner, adding "We shall have a hare." "And —and—and—and many friends." The hesitation in his speech, and the readiness of the allusion, were alike characteristic of the . . . delicate-minded and large-hearted Charles Lamb.' How the friendship went on growing; how Hood was admitted to the circle of Elia's cronies; how he married Miss Jane Reynolds, the sister of Keats's friend; how children were born to him and how he loved them; how five out of seven died before they grew up and how he toiled courageously to keep them; how he tried every journalistic venture and always failed to make money; how at last he left England with his family and lived in exile for economy's sake, first in Germany, then at Ostend; how he returned to make a success with *Hood's Own* and yet to reap no monetary gain; and how all his life was cheered by friendship and made

beautiful by his devotion to his wife, who remained his 'dearest and best' till he died, his hand in hers—all this Canon Ainger tells us with the quiet distinction that is his. Perhaps nowhere do we see Hood more clearly—the Hood that Ainger would have us see—than in some words of the poet's own in his preface to his *National Tales*, his only volume of prose.

'. . . Because I have jested elsewhere, it does not follow that I am incompetent for gravity, of which any owl is capable, or proof against melancholy, which besets even the ass. Those who can be touched by neither of these moods rank lower indeed than both of these creatures. It is from none of the player's ambition, which has led the buffoon by a rash step into the tragic buskin, that I assume the sadder humour, but because I know from certain passages that such affections are not foreign to my nature. During my short lifetime I have often been as "sad as night," and not like the young gentleman of France, merely from wantonness. It is the contrast of such leaden and golden fits that lend a double relish to our days. A life of mere laughter is like music without its bass; or a picture (conceive it) of vague, unmitigated light; whereas the occasional melancholy, like these grand rich glooms of old Rembrandt, produces an incomparable effect, and a very grateful relief.'

These words may be a clue to the attraction which Ainger felt for Thomas Hood, because, again, they are a clue to so much that he recognised in himself. And perhaps the most thoughtful pages in the memoir are those in which he sums up the effect of Hood's qualities upon our conception of poetry:—

'Indeed the peculiar genius of Hood may oblige us to reconsider more than one of our favourite literary canons; and among them, the relation of Wit and Poetry. Hood's wit is constantly poetical, and his poetry is so frequently witty as to make the division of his verse, for editorial purposes, into "serious" and "humorous," a matter of real difficulty. We are all agreed that wit is heightened by an element of poetic fancy. The question remains:—Is Poetry, when in intention serious, helped or hindered, strengthened or weakened, by admixture with Wit? The question has often been raised and discussed in connection

with the euphuistic poets—"Metaphysical" or Fantastic—of the seventeenth century, Cowley, Lovelace, Cleveland, and the rest. And the question has been so far settled, that we are all agreed that the habitual use of "conceits," wherein is mere ingenuity, is fatal to any enduring pleasure. In this shape the thing was then a fashion, and faded in due course like all other fashions. The bulk of the poetry of these men is unreadable and forgotten. But yet there were true poets among them who now and then made it abundantly clear that Wit and Poetry are two sisters, who may "dwell together in one house." Cowley, who has become, through Johnson's famous memoir, the typical example of the English *concettist*, has proved, if only by his famous comparison of Bacon to the Lawgiver on Mount Pisgah—privileged to behold, but not to enter the Promised Land—that what is in essence pure wit is not distinguishable from the very highest Poetry.

'Herbert, Crashaw, Donne, in like manner, have their abundant and perishable affectations. Yet all of these in turn show how true wit may subserve the highest aims of the Poet; and that in fact, so far from Wit and Poetry being irreconcilable, they shade and pass into one another by gradations quite imperceptible. Who shall decide, on the moment, whether Waller's couplet—

> "The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
> Lets in new light through chinks which time had made"—

is to be pronounced witty or poetical? The truth is that it is both; and that the two are fused, beyond possibility of separation, by the intensity and sincerity of the Truth enforced.'

The rest of Ainger's literary work in the last twelve years of his life consisted mainly in his lectures at the Royal Institution and elsewhere; in a few pleasurable articles contributed to *The Pilot*, notably two about Chaucer and one on 'Charm in Literature'; and in his *Life of Crabbe*, written for the English Men of Letters Series.

As for his lectures, the best ones are, as always, upon Shakespeare, and his finest sayings, on the moral greatness of the plays. There is, indeed, nothing to add to our comments on his earlier lectures, and perhaps the readiest way to prove the constant unity of thought that they show is to gather

together two or three passages from them, and to let the reader judge for himself. Those that follow are only a few examples among many which are of much the same kind.

The first is in answer to the argument that Shakespeare was the result of the great age in which he lived, and that he could not have existed without a public that shared his convictions.

'If all Shakespeare's contemporary poets showed even in general outline the qualities we note and admire in him, then a very strong case would be made out for this view. But is this so? Take, for example, the instance of Shakespeare's contemporary, Marlowe. By general agreement his verse was the finest ("Marlowe's mighty line," as Jonson called it) of the time, next to Shakespeare's. His power of conceiving and treating tragic situations was marvellous. Passages in his plays are of singular power and grandeur. But the ethical virtue of his dramas—all that quality which should have come to him from the hopes, aspirations, new-born joys of his time—was missing. He had had a more thorough school and college education than Shakespeare; he was in no less close touch with the world of wits and scholars in London; but he was dissipated and profligate and defiantly anti-religious, and died in a tavern brawl. He had no humour, as far as it is possible to discover, and no power, apparently, to conceive the beautiful or admirable in the female character. If it was the age that evoked what was finest and most characteristic in Shakespeare, why did it fail to produce something akin to it in Marlowe? Must not the answer be that it was not *there* in Marlowe to be evoked? Shakspeare's Iago was a scoundrel, and a pessimist, but surely he was right when he said, "'Tis *in ourselves* that we are thus and thus." "The abysmal depths of personality" will not bear to be neglected, I think, in our estimates of the sources of a poet's strength or weakness. If a man may be a pessimist in an optimistic age, might he not be an optimist in a pessimistic one? . . .

'It is this quality of *humanity* which constitutes the supreme ethical virtue of Shakespeare and (be it in justice said) of the noblest of his contemporaries. It is not the poet's own ethical preaching; not the preaching of the good and virtuous personages of the play; not even the presence of good and virtuous characters themselves, that accounts for the final impression left on us by any one of his dramas as a whole. Nor is it, as I have

said, any strict and invariable notion of "poetical justice." Of poetical justice, as that imbecile phrase is ordinarily understood, there is none in Shakespeare, or at least so little that some foreign critics, and even critics at home, have thought good to scorn at the *dénouements* of some of the dramas, because the punishment lights often upon innocent and guilty alike. . . . Shakespeare, when he is dealing with the serious issues of life, never regards what the "barren spectator" (for whom he seems ever to have felt a well-grounded contempt) would like to have seen. . . . The tragedy that Nicholas Nickleby translated for Mr. Crummles contains the kind of episode that pleases the groundling. . . . But Shakespeare did not write moral fairy-tales, even when he took in hand a *Midsummer Night's Dream* or a *Tempest*. . . .

'To represent on the stage Margate Sands, or Charing Cross, or a busy day on the Stock Exchange, with every detail attended to, will attract tens of thousands. . . . And though this kind of realism is very crude, and properly condemned in literary and artistic circles, there are other kinds of realism which seem to be held quite legitimate. To reflect certain sections of modern society, to show smart people always making rude answers to one another (which is called "epigram"), and of course to make them sail very near the wind in indelicate allusion, this, because a fair transcript of a certain society of the day, is provided as the attraction of many modern comedies. But it is not of the outward life, or social manners of people, that Shakespeare was thinking. "Nature" with him meant "human nature," not any particular type or temporary garb that it wears. But he meant more than this. He meant the laws which govern human nature; the laws of cause and effect, of conduct and the consequences of conduct. To these it was his business to "hold up the mirror"; and unless he did so, how was it possible that the characters he drew should appear other than either sentimental abstractions or grotesque and impertinent interpolations in the plot? . . .

'Falstaff's wit is magnificent, but it is absolutely unscrupulous. When he gets the best in argument it is always by an intellectual *coup de maître*, never by a moral. Exaggeration (which means, in effect, "never mind *truth*—go in for *point*") has never been raised to such an art. "I am out of pocket by you," poor Mrs. Quickly complains of him with bitter tears. "You owe me money, Sir John, for your diet and by-drinkings . . . and now you pick a quarrel to beguile me of it; I bought you a dozen of shirts to

your back." To which Falstaff retorts: "Dowlas, filthy dowlas" —dowlas is one of the coarsest kinds of linen, you will understand—"I have given them away to bakers' wives, and they have made bolters of them." . . . It is indeed *splendide mendax*! a miracle of exaggeration. . . .

'Or again, take the instance of his promptness . . . in what follows: "And for a retreat! how swiftly will this Feeble, the woman's tailor, run off!" He will be so useful in a *retreat*. What magnificent resource in the mind who thought of this! How magnificent—and how unscrupulous! . . . Shakespeare has done him no wrong—he has built up indeed a character on the false conception of a noble Englishman; but he has committed no treason against the eternal truths of the human conscience. "Oldcastle died a martyr, and this (Falstaff) is not the man." This was true, and needed saying in vindication of the great Lollard, but "fat" Jack witnessed also in his death to certain truths as to "conduct being four-fifths of life," of which the world will never cease to need Shakespeare's imperishable reminder. . . .

'Shakespeare, after the lightest and most fantastic of his comedies, is never without the felt presence of this moral element. It is this which from first to last—though the incidents may be terrible, or ghastly, or improbable—keeps the whole range of his drama sweet; the one strongest, most enduring charm; the thing on which his enduring popularity with all sorts and conditions of men most surely rests. . . .

'Suffering, and the transfiguration of all noble suffering into victory; goodness defeated but never humiliated; the littleness of man always made to bring into light, not shadow, the real greatness of man—it is in the "strength of that meat" that we rise up fortified from the study of these mighty works.'

If Ainger was at his best, he was also at his happiest in the company of Shakespeare. And not only when he read or wrote. 'To see him,' says Dr. Ward, 'when he could give himself up wholly to Shakespeare—and be, as it were, *totus in illo*—was indeed a sight worth seeing. I wish I could date a visit which my brother-in-law, George Loveday (who was of service to him in connection with his edition of Lamb's *Letters*), and I paid with him to Stratford-on-Avon, but it must have been some time in the late sixties or early seventies.

We slept two nights, I think, at the "Red Horse," where I wish Ainger might have met Washington Irving—only, as the Scotchman said, this "couldna be"—and we had time for a walk to Charlecote and through what we were still young and happy enough to believe to have been Mr. Justice Shallow's deer-park. Eheu!' And with Stratford Ainger's name will always be associated, for there it was, in the Parish Church and close by his master's famous bust, that he preached his sermon upon Shakespeare, at the dedication of the pulpit given by Sir Theodore Martin, in memory of his wife, Helen Faucit,[1] the actress of Rosalind and Juliet.

Apart from Shakespeare, Ainger's later lectures ranged over many subjects: over Swift and Burns, Cowper and Scott, Children's Books in the past, and his journey to trace Charles Lamb in Hertfordshire. And in all of them the same remark holds good—it is the moral judgments which are strongest. 'There was always something of the prophet in FitzGerald's, as in all fine criticism'—so Ainger once wrote of Edward FitzGerald;[2] and if we apply the saying to himself, it is of his moral insight that it will be found to hold good. In every writer that he deals with, it is the ethical quality that he first makes for; this it is which half unconsciously governs his opinion of the poet or the novelist. And it seems for this reason mainly, that, as a recent critic and admirer points out,[3] he is least at home with Swift; for this reason, too, it may be added, he is most at his ease with Cowper. But here again, and in all his later writings, we can only get some notion of his thought by quoting from his work; by putting together a few of the extracts that seem the most clearly to reveal him. We give them without further explanation.

'Swift's heart and his creed were in deadly conflict; his heart pleaded with him to be human, his creed said, "To be human is to be despicable or brutal." When he looked on Stella, his heart

[1] Her maiden name, and that under which she had acted. She afterwards became Lady Martin.

[2] *Hampstead Annual*, 1900.

[3] *Times Literary Supplement*, Dec. 1st, 1905. (Review of *Lectures and Essays*).

may have often said, "Take her and be happy," his creed said, "No, wedded love is also a delusion and a snare." '[1]

'James Smith, of *Rejected Addresses* fame, described the poet Crabbe as "Pope in worsted stockings." It is a smart epigram, but no more precisely true than epigrams usually are. But if it were legitimate we might further adapt it to Cowper and call him "Pope in a white tie." Not that *that* would be true either. . . . It was neither the moralisings nor the religious denunciations that made these poems a revelation and a delight. It was not even the witty and felicitous lines and phrases which are . . . still embedded in the daily speech of many who never read a poem of Cowper's straight through in their lives. . . . Rather was it the home-felt scenes in the "Winter Morning's Walk," and the "Walk at Noon," and the "Winter Evening" descriptions . . . prompted by deep personal affection and deep personal piety. . . . Here are no longer vague platitudes about the "Grove" and the "plain" and the "bowers" (to rhyme with "flowers"), but the eye of the minute observer — minute as Wordsworth or Tennyson.'[2]

'Burns's songs, in this day when such helpless and aimless critical deliverances are heard all round about us, come in opportunely to remind us that in literature and in art the interval between first and second-rate is practically infinite, while those between second, third, and fourth are comparatively insignificant.'[3]

'Instead of adopting a style like that of some one distinguished predecessor, let us adopt a style (our young men seem to say) as unlike as possible to anything ever used before. Instead of a style used by *somebody*, we will invent a style used by *nobody*. And many a young author has tried this last plan, and has often received a most encouraging reception from the critics on his appearance, on the strength of it.'

(After saying that in old days new writers used to seek fame by imitating great writers.) 'The great spirits of our literature who stand with heads far above the fleeting mists of earth, not often fail to recognise kindred greatness. As "deep answers unto deep," so "height answers unto height," and the mighty ones who tower above the crowd know one another from afar, and are not deceived.'[4]

[1] Lecture on Swift.
[2] Lecture on Cowper.
[3] Lecture on Burns.
[4] Lecture on Scott.

'What made Crabbe a new force in English poetry was that in his verse Pity appears, after a long oblivion, as the true antidote to Sentimentalism.'

'Crabbe's couplets are more often pedestrian rather than grotesque.'

'He is the truest realist who does not suppress any side of that which may be seen, if looked for.'

The three last sayings are not quoted from the Lectures, but from Ainger's latest work, the *Life of Crabbe*. When it appeared, in the autumn of 1903, it was judged very variously. Two well-known newspapers, he told a friend, 'complain that I am only a half-hearted admirer of Crabbe, and that (apparently) I do not gush sufficiently. This is rather a disappointment to one who read and cried over Crabbe when he was a boy, and undertook the present task in order to emphasise what singularly fine qualities the poet has, notwithstanding all defects of taste and technique which meet one at every turn. Surely the tide has turned with a vengeance, in critical quarters at least. The man in the —— really speaks of Crabbe as if he ranked with Homer and Shakespeare.'[1]

In this statement of his, Canon Ainger unconsciously hits off both the strong and the weak point of his book. He had once cried over Crabbe, and so, however long ago that had been, he can still arrest us when he writes of him. But he feels the faults of taste and technique so much that he misses some of Crabbe's finest qualities. For though he does full justice to Crabbe's moral insight, to his piety, his genius for profound epigram, his great powers of description, he gives no impression of his intensity, nor has he any grasp of his gift for dramatic situation. The truth is that he and Crabbe were not really made for one another. Most biographers need enthusiasm for their subject, and Ainger needed it especially, because, when it did not inspire him, he was apt to dwell on the points most like himself in the person he was chronicling and rather to slur over other facts which should

[1] Quoted by Mr. Holden Hutton, in *Burford Papers*, as having been said to him. (Essay on 'George Crabbe,' *Burford Papers*.)

be as salient, or more so. 'The humourist and the punster,' he wrote of Crabbe,[1] 'contend for predominance in the breast of this polished gentleman and scholar,' and the words do not ill fit himself. From this point of view, he judges the poet finely; he knows him well, too, as teacher, as parish priest, as struggling poet, and the tale of his poverty in London and of his rescue by Burke is admirably told. But he does not know Crabbe as a stern and passionate realist—although he knows that he was one; hence all his stating of the fact does not transmit it to his readers, nor does his volume convey that sense of a central truth which gives warmth and unity to the whole.

Yet when he comes to the critical task—the task of analysing, not appraising—when he sets about defining the uses and abuses of realism, there is no word to add or take away.

'A poet is not the "best" painter of nature merely because he chooses one aspect of human character and human fortunes rather than another. If he must not conceal the sterner side, equally is he bound to remember the sunnier and more serene. . . . He must remember that though there is a skeleton in every cupboard, it must not be dragged out for a purpose, nor treated as if it were the sole inhabitant. He must deal with the happiness of life, and not only with its miseries; with its harmonies and not only its dislocations. He must remember the thousand homes in which is to be found the quiet and faithful discharge of duty, inspired at once and illumined by the family affections, and not forget that in such as these the strength of a country lies. . . . It was because Crabbe too often laid greater stress on the ugliness than on the beauty of things that he fails to that extent to be the full and adequate painter and poet of humble life.'

'It is,' he says elsewhere in the book, 'to the "graver mind" rather than to the "lighter heart" that he oftenest appeals. Newman, to mention no small names, found Crabbe's pathos and fidelity to Human Nature even more attractive to him in advanced years than in youth. There is indeed much in common between Crabbe's treatment of life and its problems, and Newman's. Both may be called "stern" portrayers of human nature, not

[1] Essay on George Crabbe (*Burford Papers*).

only as intended in Byron's famous line, but in Wordsworth's use of the epithet when he invoked Duty as the "stern Daughter of the Voice of God."'

One possession Alfred Ainger had which never failed him—his pure and distinguished style. It was born with him, and he kept it intact till the end. Choiceness rather than brilliance is its essential quality, and when he asserted that he 'wrote as the Scotsman joked—with deeficulty,' he did not overstate the truth. 'You have pierced the joints of my armour,' he once said to a friend, who had been writing about the napkins in which men tied up their talents and had spoken by the way of the paralysing fastidiousness that often deprived literature of the most literary writers. Doubtless, he might have written more, but then he would not have been himself, and that he invariably was. Perhaps his gift was one of personality rather than one of originality, and this makes his work the harder to detach from him and therefore difficult to quote from. Of anything second-rate he was incapable. Good taste, which involves good sense, and the moral wisdom which cuts deeper, were what from first to last he made for. And in his attempt to win them, he gained something else besides—a something which he himself has described as a distinction of Charles Lamb's. For us it also breathes from *his* pages: 'The undying attraction that belongs to the unity of sincerity and charm, which means purity of heart, and tenderness—itself gold and turning to gold all it touches—the charity which in literature, as in life, is the grace above all graces.'[1]

[1] 'How I traced Charles Lamb in Hertfordshire' (*Lectures and Essays*).

CHAPTER XIX

THE END

Hitherto there had been no real break in Ainger's strength. Delicate and changeable his health always was, but he had the resistance that so often belongs to frail people. Until 1903 he remained active, almost young. Those who haunted the Embankment will remember his daily walk there; they will keep an image of his figure, leaning slightly forward, and of his quick step—so quick that his companion could scarcely keep up with it—and of his sudden halt to feed the gulls; of the white birds wheeling round his upturned head and flocking round him to take the crumbs. So intent was he on the gulls, that he was not aware of the little group that used to gather round him, but would stride away again unconscious, bent upon finishing his constitutional. And until the summer of the same year he kept all his usual public engagements, remaining faithful as ever to old ties. One of the last committees he attended was that of the Hampstead Concert Society, which always met at his house and received his counsels.

At Bristol, too, he had fully kept up his activities. And outside his professional duties—the two cathedral services daily, the chapter meetings, the philanthropic chairmanships, the preachings for neighbouring clergymen—the list of these activities was a long one. Nowhere else was he so constantly asked to read, or to lecture, for charities or for educational purposes: for a Girls' High School, for the Pupil Teachers, for the boys of the Cathedral School, to whom, besides this, he set a yearly examination paper in a Shakespeare play, himself giving the prize. And nowhere else, perhaps, did his social life make such incessant demands upon him. He hardly ever dined at home; and as, year by year, the num-

ber of Bristol friends increased, friends whom he loved as well as liked, the claims of friendship were added to those of society.

All this he thoroughly enjoyed, yet he felt the strain almost unconsciously, often attributing his sense of fatigue to the relaxing climate of the place. From the first, this had oppressed him considerably, though, like many other people, he had tried to avoid its ill effects by living on the heights of Clifton. But he showed no sign of giving in, unless it were that in the last years he gave up officiating at the daily morning service and avoided walking up and down the steep Clifton Hill to and from the Cathedral, making, for him, the great concession of driving home every afternoon.

Bristol repaid him by loving him. A friend of his, Mr. Leonard, has left us a portrait of him there, which, though it does not—as how could it?—tell of any new qualities, yet gives us a living impression of him at his work, framed in by the wharfs and thoroughfares of the busiest of Cathedral cities.

'He was,' it runs, 'a man we could ill spare. . . . His presence counted. . . . We liked to see him moving through our streets. . . . He did not look like other men. . . . A painter indeed could hardly have wished for a better subject than Canon Ainger; drawing him, perhaps, as he sat deep in his chair, his hands held up and clasped together, as was his manner sometimes . . . his whole face listening. . . . Or an artist with a feeling for colour might have left us, one is tempted to think, a picture of the preacher, bending over his paper in the pulpit, with the beautiful hair, the ivory face, and the full and long white surplice—hopelessly out of ecclesiastical fashion, I am afraid—that he allowed himself to wear.'

'And what was it that gave him his charm as a reader? . . . His voice, if not very strong, was of remarkable beauty and flexibility. It could be, when he wished it, full of music. I shall never forget the way in which he read the song of Ariel in the *Tempest*. One could hear the sea-nymphs ringing out the knell of the drowned father. . . . It seemed no "mortal business," no sound framed by a human voice. The very words were like a bell. He did not attempt to force his hearers against their will, or

beyond their intelligence, but those who had the ear to hear might hear.'[1]

The same friend tells us how he once told him some anecdote in a letter. 'Your story was excellent,' answered Ainger, 'and I have already made several appreciative persons happy with it.' 'That was it,' says Mr. Leonard, 'he made himself and others "happy" with good stories.'

It was not in Bristol, but in London, in the summer of 1903, that a marked change came over him. Till June he led his life as usual, finishing his biography of Crabbe, enjoying Joachim's music, seeing friends. But in June influenza laid him low, weakening his heart. 'I am very ill—with two nurses and everything handsome about me,' he wrote while still in bed, prostrate—even then cheered by memories of Dogberry. And though to all appearances he recovered, he was not the same again. Family troubles, too, came to sadden him. In July Mr. Walter Evans, the husband of his younger niece, died, while the delicacy of the elder one had for some time caused him anxiety. However, he revived in Scotland, although he was obliged to give up walking much—hitherto his favourite resource—and very small exertions tired him. In October he resumed his duties, and threw himself into them with his usual zest. Never did he more enjoy the music at the Temple, or that which his beloved organist, Walford Davies, often made for him at home. And nothing made him happier in these last months than the growing success of this younger friend, or interested him more than his compositions, especially 'Everyman,' the setting of which to music had originally been Ainger's suggestion. The depression of the summer had vanished and he kept his engagements without undue effort: going down to Bristol to read a paper on preaching, on October 14, before the Church Congress; dining on the Grand Day at the Middle Temple to meet the King; coming from his nephew's home at Sandwich to attend a Literary Fund Committee one morning, and travelling to Cambridge the same afternoon. On November 19, he had pledged himself to

[1] *Canon Ainger—a Short Study*, by George Hare Leonard.

preach at St. Paul's for the London Choir Association, of which Dr. Davies was the conductor, and the strain upon his voice and his strength resulted in exhaustion; nor was his state much improved by preaching three days after in the Chapel Royal. This was his last sermon. And the lecture that, on the 23rd, he gave upon Cowper at Lord Brassey's, proved to be his last lecture. Many remarked that day how ill he looked; and when he returned home, he himself said that he had almost been compelled to sit upon the table, so weak and unable to stand had he felt before he got through his task. He consulted his old friend, Dr. Bowles, who found that there was mischief at his heart and forbade him to preach or to walk.

At first Ainger thought that the discomfort was passing, that all would soon be as before and that January would see him in Bristol; but gradually the truth was borne in upon him, and though he was not seriously anxious, he knew that a great change had come. At the end of November he had resolved to resign his canonry. He felt the touch of age upon him, the first real weakening of the powers that had never failed him till now. 'This is the saddest day of my life,' he said, when he sent the final letter about Bristol. His resignation was met by an outburst of regret, of letters both from friends and strangers. Perhaps the one that gratified him most came from Mr. Arnold Thomas, a Nonconformist minister near Bristol, whom he hardly knew.

'Sneyd Park, Bristol.

'Dear Canon Ainger' (it runs),—'It was on my mind to write to you when I read, to my great sorrow, of your resignation, but I felt that, on the whole, it would be kinder not to trouble you.

'Now, however, that you have replied by anticipation to any such letters as this, I feel the more free to write and say that I grieve very much over the loss which this city has sustained. You have been a great reconciling influence here. And we sorely need such influences. Amid all the brawling that goes on, we must thank Heaven for every clear eye that is steadily fixed on the best and essential things, and every voice that is heard bearing witness, without clamour or bitterness, to the noble simplicities

of piety and goodness. Such an eye and such a voice we have had for these sixteen years in Bristol, and now—but we will praise God for His gift, and try to be the right sort of people ourselves.—Yours most truly, H. Arnold Thomas.'

And this is Canon Ainger's answer:

'Dear Mr. Thomas,—There are *some* letters—kind and gratifying—that I have been able to answer only through the public press, but *yours* must not be one of these! For indeed it gave me pleasure of a deep and rare sort. I think I may say without presumption that you have truly interpreted one chief aim and object that I have had in view during the years of my connection with Bristol. I *have* tried to lay stress upon the things that *matter*: the great things of God; and to show how miserably, by the side of these, bulk the petty things about which so many of us spend our lives in arguing. It has been, I assure you, one of the chiefest comforts of my Bristol career that I learned from time to time that my Nonconformist brethren, such as yourself, looked favourably upon my efforts, and regarded me as a fellow-worker with themselves.

'I wish I could have seen more of you; but the incidents of a canonical residence make it difficult to find time for much social and intellectual communion with *any* of one's fellow-teachers.

'I thank you heartily for your letter, and feel the better and braver for it.

'I suppose you are seldom in London, or it would give me extreme pleasure to see and entertain you at my Temple House. . . .

'Once more thanking you deeply, I remain, dear Mr. Thomas, most truly yours, Alfred Ainger.'

And he writes in the same strain to Miss Sturge from the Temple:

'It has been ever my earnest desire and aim in my ministrations at Bristol to lay stress . . . on the great truths which unite us, and to keep in the background the petty fancies and fabrications that keep us apart. My real and lasting reward was in the appreciation of those whose approval I valued, and the friendship of so many that I hope I may never forfeit.'

Meanwhile friends were flocking round his sofa in London

and doing their best to cheer the hours of inactivity which went so against his nature. He had often longed for repose, but only as a longing could it have pleased him. 'The rest of which he dreamed when he retired from professional work could only mean to such a temperament . . . restlessness'—these words of his own about Lamb equally fit his case. Talk was now his great resource, for reading easily fatigued him and writing was impossible.

'*November* 27, 1903.

'My dear Lathbury' (he wrote to the editor of the *Pilot*),—'You must not be angry with me—I have not been well of late—and indeed my heart has been playing tricks, probably (my doctor says) as a pleasant outcome of my influenza in the summer. "Drop the *Pilot*"—never! As long as I have a sixpence it shall have threepence. But never again will I write "reviews" or compose *round about* any book. I can't do it, and I *hate* it! I wish I could think of any subject on which I could write, but I know so little of anything, and everything has been done.

'Your reviewer of my *Crabbe* is handsome enough towards *me*. But why does he have his knife into the poor poet, and insinuate that he took Orders simply and solely for a livelihood? There is no foundation for such a statement.

'I know that Crabbe was not a High Churchman, but his subsequent attitude towards Dissenters ought to have warmed the heart of any contributor to the *Pilot*.—Ever yours,

'A. Ainger.'

Happily music never failed in its power to soothe him, and more than one was at hand to play or sing to him. There was a memorable evening in December when Dr. Davies played and the two planned a future rendering of *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, with Ainger to read it and his friend to provide the accompaniment—an interpretation like their former achievements, *The Brook* and *The Ancient Mariner*. Elated by the music he had heard, Canon Ainger once more took up a volume of Wordsworth and read 'The Ode to Duty' and the 'Lines on the Departure of Sir Walter Scott from Abbotsford for Naples,' letting his voice linger lovingly on his favourite line:

'Wafting your charge to soft Parthenope.'

He read 'Rose Aylmer,' too, to the little group of friends in the room—the group that was to hear him no more. Christmas came on apace. On the Sunday before Christmas Day he sat in the vestry and listened to part of the Christmas Oratorio, and on Christmas Day itself he enjoyed the carols sung by the choir-boys, who came to him in the early morning. That day he was present in church and assisted at the Holy Communion, nor was he absent from the service on the two following Sundays. He seemed decidedly better, and his spirits rose accordingly. 'My doctors say I have got a dilated heart—but your kindness has made it also a delighted one,' he wrote to a friend, Mrs. Causton, who had just knitted him a waistcoat—and one (as he announced with pride) that the tailor called 'an almost perfect fit.' He liked to make jokes about his heart. 'Although the doctor says my heart is wrong, you shall always find it in the right place,' he said (quoting his favourite Hood) to another friend, on New Year's Eve.[1]

On January 5 he was allowed to travel to Darley Abbey. Had he some vague premonition of the end? Little things seem to point to it. 'I am just now barred from all work and exciting matters,' he writes from there, 'and am resting by my physician's orders as much as possible. I am staying here with my widowed niece—the younger of the two to whom I was long ago left guardian and who have been to me as daughters.' These last words, sent, as they were, to a stranger and from so reserved a man, are not without significance; and little chance expressions in other letters that he wrote at this time convey a sense that just now he was realising, with almost the acuteness of parting, the things that had made life precious to him.

The first days of his stay went by peacefully, diversified by country drives and undisturbed, save by his anxiety to provide preachers at the Temple.

'Do you know any "mute, inglorious" Hookers, whom I might allow to air their fancies in that august arena?' he wrote to Mrs.

[1] Thomas Hood told a friend that the doctors said his heart was 'hung too low.' 'Never mind,' he added, '*you* shall always find it in the right place.'

Andrew Lang on January 10. 'I am thinking of doing Hood for the Men of Letters Series—expanding for the purpose a memoir I once prefixed to an edition of his Poems in the Eversley Series. Did you ever read it? I almost think it is my best piece of prose thus far.'

But he did not gain in strength.

'All your other news' (he wrote to Walford Davies on January 12), 'as that of our boys taking part in the Bach Choir Chorus was, you will believe, music to my ears. And indeed in every success that you achieve, you have no warmer sympathisers and rejoicers than the household of the "Master's House." . . . As for myself, I don't know of much change in my physical condition. After a past week of "physic," I am now to pass a fresh week *without* any! Which reminds me of the Irishman who fed his pig one day, and starved it the next, in order to produce "streaky" bacon. But I suppose there is some method in the inscrutable ways of the medical profession. . . .'

On January 19, he read for the last time, to a girl who was staying in the house and whom he did not want to disappoint. He asked her to come close up to him so that she might hear, and he read her Thackeray's 'Little Dinner at Timmins's,' with all his old spirit. That night he went up to his room, never to come down again. He had caught a severe chill, and the bad symptoms at the heart reasserted themselves. On the evening of the 22nd he sent down a message to his elder niece, asking her to go to him. When she came he began to speak rather hurriedly; he said that he thought he should not live; that he had no fear of death; that, although he knew all his faults, his faith upheld and consoled him. 'My life,' he added, 'has been happy, and no one has had such friends as I have.' Of many of these he talked with love and thankfulness, and he charged her with special messages to them. After his first words he was calm and collected, and he expressed very lucidly his wishes as to certain matters of business. In the next few days he grew worse, but he did not again allude to his death, excepting once, not long before it happened, when, thinking that no

one heard him, he whispered, 'The end has come, the end has come, I only stand and wait.'

'Well, nurse, you will have a very troublesome patient,' was his greeting when the sick-nurse came, but he did not fulfil his prediction. He was perfectly patient, even cheerful, as long as he remained conscious, and tenderly considerate of others. Pneumonia soon supervened, and matters became more critical. Dr. Bowles, his friend of fifty years, was sent for. 'Robert, you have come to take me out of the jaws of death,' he said to him when he arrived—but generally he tried to make light of his bodily distresses. 'Never mind, it will soon be all right,' was his usual formula after any acute bout of suffering.

He had moments of revival, but they were transitory and his strength quickly sank again. His impressions became confused, yet confused in a characteristic way. He thought, for instance, that a photograph from an Italian picture which hung opposite his bed was the portrait of Frederick Denison Maurice, whose spirit, it would seem, was still with him and guarded the approaches of death. In his last week, the first week of February, he spoke little to others, but 'he constantly murmured the names of those with whom he had lived in his younger days, and often repeated the name of his faithful old Nurse, Lem. Sometimes he would hum a few bars of music, and one morning early, when his window was open and he heard the birds singing, he said, "Those were very agreeable voices I heard this morning."' These were almost his last coherent words. When his niece came into his room on Monday morning, the 8th of February, she saw that he had greatly altered. As she stood near his bed, 'he opened his eyes and gave an unforgettable look—a wonderful look which seemed to express surprise and happiness. It was as if he had been at the gates of Heaven and had come back for a moment.' All the morning he lay unconscious, and at a quarter to one he passed away. The next day, February 9, would have been his sixty-seventh birthday.

Many of his friends came from London to attend his funeral in Derbyshire; many more were present at the memorial

service in the Temple Church, where Dr. Davies played the Master's favourite song of Schubert—the beautiful *Litanei aller Seelen*. And he lies at rest, as he desired, next to his friend, Walter Evans, in the churchyard of Darley Abbey. On the cross above the grave are the words: 'I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.'

. . . . . .

The story of Alfred Ainger is the story of a personality, and of one more than usually elusive. The effect that he produced upon the world is inseparable from that of his presence, and in his case, more than in most, it may be said that the letter killeth. His spiritual message, though a permanent, was a quiet one, more akin to the humble pieties of daily life than to the problems of modern thought. He belonged to no main road, either of time or of literature; his gift was not for greatness, but distinction. And it was in the winding bypaths, with their unexpected twists and turnings, with their sudden outlooks on fair places, that his figure was wont to wander. There it is that he will still be found by those who seek him out; that he will still speak to those who love him for what he is.

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